Thursday, April 16, 2026 No 105 ₹7

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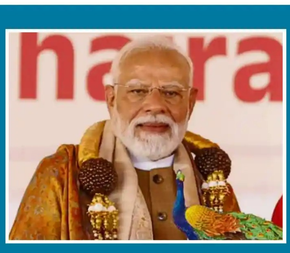

PM lists Viksit Bharat formula at Adichunchanagiri

Page 4

Trump hints at end of war; Iran ups threat

BLOCKADE: Tehran threatens to shut Red Sea trade

DUBAI/TEHRAN, AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump has said that the war with Iran is "close to over", asserting that if he pulled up stakes right now, it would take Tehran 20 years to rebuild the country.

Washington has sought to turn the screws on Tehran with a blockade of its ports, with US Central Command claiming to have "completely halted economic trade going into and out of Iran by sea".

"I think it's close to over, yeah. I view it as very close to being over," Trump told *Fox News* in an interview that was to be telecast later Wednesday.

Earlier, speaking to the *New York Post* on Tuesday, Trump said a new round of talks could take place in Pakistan "over the next two days".

Meanwhile, *Reuters* reported that Tehran could consider allowing ships to sail freely through the Oman side of the Strait of Hormuz without risk of attack as part of proposals it has offered in negotiations with the US if a deal is clinched.

Earlier, Iran's military threatened to shut down Red Sea trade unless the US lifted its naval blockade on Tehran's ports.

▸ Iran, Page 8

WAR EFFECTS

- **US V- P JD Vance** says Trump told Iran the US will **"make Iran thrive"** if it committed to **"not having a nuclear weapon"**
- **Israel, Lebanon** agree to hold direct negotiations after **"productive discussions"** between two sides in Washington
- **Hezbollah** says it targeted 13 northern Israeli towns with rockets
- **IMF** cuts 2026 growth forecast for **West Asia** and **North Africa** to **1.1%**

Israeli soldiers next to artillery vehicles near the Israel-Lebanon border, in northern Israel, on Wednesday. REUTERS

Pak delegation in Iran

A Pakistani delegation, led by Chief of the Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir, reached Tehran on Wednesday as part of Islamabad's efforts to resolve the conflict between the US and Iran.

Related reports, Page 12

Iranian crew return home

Over 200 Iranian crew members from two warships—IRIS Dena (sunk by the US) and IRIS Bushehr—who were rescued by Sri Lanka have been sent back to their homeland, a top Lankan official said Wednesday.

BJP's Samrat Choudhary takes oath as Bihar CM in Patna on Wednesday. PTI

Samrat takes oath as Bihar's 1st BJP CM with 2 JD(U) deputies

ABHAY KUMAR
PATNA

BJP Legislature Party leader Samrat Choudhary was sworn in as the 24th Chief Minister of Bihar at the Lok Bhavan here on Wednesday. The oath was administered by Governor Lt Gen (Retd) Syed Ata Hasnain at a simple function, which was attended by BJP national president Nitin Nabin, Union Ministers J P Nadda, Chirag Paswan and former chief minister Nitish Kumar.

Two seniormost JD(U) leaders – Vijay Choudhary and Bijendra Yadav - were also administered the oath as ministers. Both the leaders will be the two new Dy CMs representing the JD(U), a pattern started by the BJP in November 2020, when the saffron camp had two deputies of Nitish.

▸ Samrat, Page 8

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India in talks with other nations over Hormuz crisis

MEA says country will work towards developing supply chain resilience

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Centre on Wednesday said India is actively engaging with other countries to address the situation in the Strait of Hormuz and ensure the safe return of Indian vessels currently in the region.

"We continue to call for dialogue and diplomacy to bring an early end to this conflict," Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson of MEA, said at the inter-ministerial briefing on recent development in West Asia.

The statement comes amid heightened concerns over maritime security in the strategically vital waterway, which handles a significant portion of India's oil imports.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday participated in the 'AZEC (Asia Zero Emission Community) Plus' meeting convened by Japan to discuss supply chain disruptions in the energy markets.

Iranians pass by a large billboard referring to the Strait of Hormuz in Tehran on Wednesday. AFP

The minister underlined India's strong commitment to safe and unimpeded transit passage of maritime shipping.

"As a major energy consumer, India will work with like-minded partners to develop supply chain resilience," Jaiswal said.

The Ministry of External Affairs also said India continues to buy oil from diversified sources keeping in mind the energy requirements of the Indian population, the global situation and market condition.

At least 15 Indian-flagged vessels are currently stranded west of the Strait of Hormuz choke-point after the US announced a blockade of Iranian ports and coastal areas.

The Director General of Shipping has facilitated the safe repatriation of over 2,337 Indian seafarers so far, including 75 in the past 24 hours from various locations across the Gulf region, the government said.

The central government also reiterated that there is adequate stock of fuel and asked people to buy fuel only as per requirement.

"Domestic LPG supply is normal and no dry-outs have been reported anywhere. Online LPG bookings is at 98% and 93% deliveries are through authentication codes," said Sujata Sharma, joint secretary in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

Average auto LPG sale by PSU oil marketing companies till April 14 was around 282 million tonne /day as against the average of 177 MT/day during February, she said.

Since March 2026, about 4.5 lakh PNG connections have been gassified and about 5 lakh additional customers have registered for new connections, she said.

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas said 2,100 raids were conducted on Tuesday to crack down on black marketing and illegal hoarding, and till now, penalties have been imposed on 237 distributors.

STRAIT STORY

- At least 15 Indian vessels are stranded west of the Strait of Hormuz choke-point
- 2,337 vessels have been safely repatriated from various locations across the Gulf region
- India is buying oil from diversified sources, said MEA
- The Centre allays fears of fuel shortage

Punjab govt withdraws Chadha's Z-plus security cover

CHANDIGARH, PTI: Days after a verbal spat between MP Raghav Chadha and AAP over his removal from the post of deputy leader in the Rajya Sabha, the Punjab government has withdrawn his Z-plus category security cover, it has been learnt.

Meanwhile, sources in Delhi said Chadha may be provided a security cover by the Centre.

Chadha is a Rajya Sabha MP from Punjab and was accorded by the state government a Z-plus category security cover. The cover was withdrawn a few days ago, sources said.

Raghav Chadha

AAP on April 2 announced the replacement of Chadha with MP Ashok Mittal for the post of deputy leader in the Rajya Sabha.

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said he believed Chadha was "compromised" for denying the party whip.

Punjab AAP leaders, including Cabinet minister Harpal Singh Cheema, too attacked Chadha, accusing him of failing to raise the state's issues in Parliament.

Meanwhile, the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and Congress criticised the AAP government over the move.

Lokesh named TDP national working chief

Party unveils major organisational revamp

S N V SUDHIR
HYDERABAD, DHNS

The ruling TDP in Andhra Pradesh has unveiled a sweeping organisational overhaul, placing Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's son and Cabinet Minister Nara Lokesh at the centre of its leadership structure — a move that signals an unmistakable generational transition in one of the state's most powerful political parties.

Nara Lokesh

On Wednesday, Naidu announced the creation of a new post, national working president, and appointed Lokesh to the role, a decision that firmly positions the younger Naidu as the party's heir apparent and lays out a clear roadmap for its future leadership.

Gajuwaka MLA Palla Srinivas was appointed party state president.

Lokesh, who previously served as the party's national general secretary, has steadily consolidated his influence within the TDP — most visibly through his high-profile Yuva Galam pada yatra ahead of the 2024 polls — and is widely regarded as the most powerful figure in both the government and the party after his father.

In another appointment, the party named MP Byreddy Shabari as its first-ever woman national general secretary. She joins MP and Union Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu and Rajesh Kilaru in the role. "This decision sends a strong political message, aligning with the broader vision of enhanced women's representation, particularly in the context of the women's reservation framework," a TDP leader said.

The restructured organisational architecture comprises a 29-member politburo, a 31-member national committee, and an expansive 185-member state committee. Party leaders said the committees were constituted after extensive deliberations, with attention to regional and political balance, and with an eye on long-term goals, including the 2029 elections and potential constituency reorganisation.

Of the 185 state committee members, 122 belong to weaker sections, 77 from Backward Classes, 25 from SCs, seven from STs, and 13 from minority communities. Women have been accorded unprecedented prominence, with 50 included in the state committee and significant representation secured across the politburo and national committees.

Classmate to power centre: Rajesh Kilaru's rise

Among the many appointments in the TDP's restructuring, one name stood out — Rajesh Kilaru. Long known as Nara Lokesh's closest confidant and backroom strategist, Kilaru has now been elevated to national general secretary, reports DHNS.

Rajesh's ascent reflects just how central he has become to the party's decision-making architecture.

He joined the party in 2012 when it was in the Opposition.

He and Lokesh had shared a classroom at a Hyderabad school, and their bond stretches back decades.

Rajesh stood by Lokesh through the party's most difficult chapter, the humiliating 2019 election defeat that reduced the TDP to just 23 Assembly seats. It was in the aftermath of that rout that Kilaru's strategic instincts proved most valuable.

YOUTH PIVOT

Can 'Kath Ba'ath' reset PDP's politics?

ZULFIKAR MAJID
SRINAGAR, DHNS

In a political landscape reshaped after Article 370, People's Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti appears to be quietly recalibrating her politics—placing youth distress and everyday concerns at the centre of her outreach.

Her recent "Kath Ba'ath" (let us talk) interaction in central Kashmir's Budgam district is part of a broader effort over the past year to reconnect with young people through direct, small-group conversations rather than traditional rallies. The format itself marks a shift: less rhetoric, more listening.

At the Budgam event, Mufti flagged what she described as growing "youth distress," linking it to unemployment, drug abuse, and a pervasive sense of uncertainty. The emphasis was not on immediate solutions but on acknowledging lived realities.

Over time, this consistent focus has begun to reshape the PDP's messaging. Once identified strongly with themes of reconciliation and political dialogue, the party is now foregrounding socio-economic anxieties within Kashmir.

Prof Gul Mohammad Wani, former head, University of Kashmir's Political Sciences department, sees this as both necessary and strategic. "Mainstream politics in Kashmir cannot sustain itself on abstract narratives alone anymore. There is a generational shift, and youth concerns—employment, identity, dignity—are central. Mehbooba Mufti seems to be recognising that gap."

PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti

Mufti's outreach also draws on an older political legacy. She continues to invoke the "healing touch" approach of her father and PDP founder, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, but with a contemporary adaptation—less about conflict management and more about social healing.

Since the mid-1990s, when insurgency and allegations of human rights violations were at their peak, Mufti had cultivated an image as an accessible and interventionist leader.

She was often seen visiting families and, at times, directly engaging with security agencies to seek the release of detained youth—earning her credibility among the young and economically vulnerable.

That legacy, however, is accompanied by political memory. During the 2016 unrest following the killing of Hizbul Mujahideen Burhan Wani, her "milk and toffee" remark—made in response to attacks on security installations by angry youth—triggered sharp criticism and continues to be invoked by opponents.

At the time, the comment was widely perceived as insensitive amid heightened public anger. Mufti has since indicated that it reflected a mother's concern for young people being drawn into violence, suggesting it was intended more as a cautionary appeal than a dismissal of their grievances.

That tension—bewteen past perception and present outreach—frames her current political moment.

PDP leader Zuhaib Mir argues that initiatives like "Kath Ba'ath" are designed precisely to bridge that gap. "'Kath Ba'ath' is impactful because it focuses on real, grassroots interaction. In the Srinagar programme earlier this year, we saw young people speak openly about unemployment, stress, and uncertainty," he told *DH*.

In Kashmir, where there is deep social pain, that matters, he said. While the broader 'Kashmir issue' dominates political discourse, 'Kath Ba'ath' shifts attention to the everyday challenges—the real issues in Kashmir.

Whether this recalibration stems from conviction or compulsion remains open to debate.

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Rasikh, Bhuvi lead LSG rout

Batters complement bowlers as RCB romp to 5-wicket win

Page 16

Cong MLA Vinay Kulkarni convicted in murder case

Guilty of Dharwad ZP member's killing; sentencing today

AMBARISH B
BENGALURU, DHNS

A Bengaluru court has convicted Congress MLA and former minister Vinay Kulkarni in the Yogeeshgouda Goudar murder case that rocked the state nearly a decade ago.

Judge Santhosh Gajanan Bhat of the Special Court for Cases Involving Elected Representatives found the Dharwad MLA guilty of criminal conspiracy and murder. However, the court acquitted Kulkarni and another accused, Chandrashekar Indi, of offences under the Arms Act due to a lack of prosecution sanction.

The quantum of punishment is expected to be pronounced on Thursday.

The case relates to the killing of Goudar, a BJP zilla panchayat member, inside a Dharwad gym on June 15, 2016. According to the charge sheet, Kulkarni, then the district in-charge minister, hired killers to eliminate Goudar because he did not want the latter to grow as a leader.

After an initial police investigation, the case was handed over to the CBI in 2019 by the then-BJP government.

In its second additional charge sheet, the agency named Kulkarni accused number 15 for offences under IPC sections 120B, 143, 147, 148, 302 and under section 25 read with sections 3, 5, 8 and 29 of the Arms Act. According to the charge sheet, Kulkarni contacted Shivanand Shrishaila Biradar, an accused who turned approver, and pressured him to depose against the prosecution.

▸ Vinay Kulkarni, Page 8

CASE FILE

- Goudar was murdered at his gym in Dharwad on **June 15, 2016**
- **In 2019,** the then BJP government transferred the case to the CBI
- **In 2020,** the CBI arrested Kulkarni
- **In August 2021,** the Supreme Court granted him bail but later cancelled it on June 6, 2025
- **In January 2026,** Karnataka HC rejected his bail petition, observing that it would be against judicial propriety for any other court to reconsider when the SC cancelled the bail

Delimitation: Govt, Oppn face-off likely

Oppn to vote against contentious Bill to be taken up in LS today

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi at a meeting of Opposition leaders to discuss the delimitation Bill, in New Delhi, on Wednesday. PTI

The Modi government and the Opposition are headed for an unprecedented showdown in the Lok Sabha over a move to amend the Constitution to allow new provisions for delimitation. The contentious Bill's fate is hanging in balance after the Opposition announced on Wednesday that they will vote against it, calling it an "attempted power grab" through "gerrymandering".

The Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, which will be moved in the Lok Sabha on Thursday, stares at the possibility of falling down as the NDA camp may not be able to garner the two-third majority for the passage of the legislation, which provides for redrawing constituencies on the basis of the 2011 Census, after increasing the Lower House's strength to 850 for early implementation of 33% women's quota.

In the House of 540 MPs, the NDA has the support of 294 while parties representing 238 MPs have voiced their opposition to the Bill. Of this, at least 18 parties with 234 MPs have said they will vote against the Bill, which needs 360 votes to pass if all 540 MPs are voting.

The Bill will test the government's ability to get a Constitution amendment Bill cleared despite the odds being stacked against it.

▸ Delimitation, Page 8

> The proposal to increase Lok Sabha seats from 543 to 850 will systematically reduce the voice of the South, while rewarding unchecked population growth elsewhere. The southern states will stand united, speak in one voice, and defend the true spirit of federalism. We will not allow the South to be politically marginalised.
>
> **D K Shivakumar,** Karnataka DyCM

Hoist black flags: Stalin

Upping the ante on the Bill on delimitation, TN CM M K Stalin appealed to the people in the state to hoist black flags in every home and public places to protest against the "injustice".

Details on Page 11

Rahul's warning to TMC

Reacting to possible absence of some of TMC MPs in the LS due to poll campaign, Rahul Gandhi warned this will be seen as helping the BJP.

Details on Page 11

To declare beliefs of millions as wrong is most difficult: SC

ASHISH TRIPATHI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Sabarimala temple

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said it would be one of the most difficult tasks for a court to declare the beliefs of millions wrong or erroneous.

While hearing review petitions in the Sabarimala case, a nine-judge bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant also said social welfare cannot be used to hollow out religion.

The Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB), which managed the historic Sabarimala temple in Kerala, contended that religion is a set of beliefs and practices followed by a denomination with a broadly similar identity and the court cannot sit in judgement of that belief.

Senior advocate A M Singhvi for the Travancore Devaswom Board argued that while Article 25(2)(b) can be claimed by all sects of Hindus, to demand entry to a Hindu religious institution of public character, the religious denomination will have the right under Article 26(b) to regulate how the inner rituals must be performed. He favoured a harmonious interpretation of Article 25(2)(b) and Article 26(b).

The bench also comprised Justices B V Nagarathna, M M Sundresh, Ahsanuddin Amanullah, Aravind Kumar, Augustine George Masih, Prasanna B Varale, R Mahadevan, and Joymalya Bagchi.

During the hearing, the bench asked Singhvi why Article 25(2)(b) used the phrase "social reform" instead of the words "public order, morality, or health", which are used in the opening of Article 25.

▸ SC, Page 8

Vaishali wins Candidates title

PAPHOS (CYPRUS), AGENCIES: Grandmaster R Vaishali defeated Russia's Kateryna Lagno to clinch the Women's Candidates Tournament title on Wednesday.

The victory takes her to 8.5 points and secures her a place in the World Championship match later this year.

Details on Page 15

Sabotage row deepens: Cong suspends MLC

BENGALURU, DHNS: Congress on Wednesday suspended MLC Abdul Jabbar for "anti-party activities" during the April 9 Davangere South bypoll.

This triggered a backlash from Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's loyalists.

MLC Abdul Jabbar

Jabbar's expulsion, preceded by the sacking of Congress MLC Naseer Ahmed as the chief minister's political secretary, is being seen as Siddaramaiah's men being picked off one by one.

There are also calls for action against Housing Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan, another Siddaramaiah loyalist.

All three — Jabbar, Ahmed and Zameer — have been accused of being involved in attempts to sabotage the Congress' election effort in Davangere South.

In a statement, Deputy Chief Minister and Karnataka Congress president DK Shivakumar announced that Abdul Jabbar has been suspended from the party's primary membership.

This, he said, was "in view of his anti-party activities in the recent by-election of Davangere South assembly constituency."

It was only last week that Jabbar resigned as chairperson of the Congress' minorities department, which Shivakumar accepted.

▸ Abdul Jabbar, Page 8

India-US trade talks to resume

NEW DELHI, DHNS: An India delegation will visit Washington next week to resume talks on the India-US bilateral trade agreement, for which the framework was announced in February, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal, said on Wednesday. The delegation will be led by India's chief negotiator Darpan Jain, a senior IAS officer from the Karnataka cadre.

Details on Page 13

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LIC/R1/2026-27/01/Eng

Karnataka launches quantum map to anchor Q-City hub

Blueprint unveiled for statewide innovation push

BENGALURU, DHNS

Minister for Minor Irrigation and Science and Technology NS Boseraju on Wednesday launched a comprehensive Quantum Ecosystem Map on the occasion of World Quantum Day.

Q-City, a flagship quantum hub, aims to bring together academia, startups and industry on a single platform for quantum technologies.

Envisioned as a single-window ecosystem, it is intended to enable the translation of research into real-world applications.

The roadmap outlines plans to build a statewide quantum ecosystem, along with implementation strategies, milestones and targets through 2035, with a focus on scalable and sustainable growth.

Speaking at the event, Boseraju said, "We are the first state in India to come up with a Quantum Ecosystem Map. Karnataka is already at the forefront of this technology. Prepared by IISc, this map captures key technological advancements and showcases an ecosystem that no other state currently has. We are proud to launch such a comprehensive mapping initiative."

He added that the detailed project report for Q-City will be initiated shortly and overseen by the state's Quantum Task Force.

"The government is also focusing on building a strong pipeline of skilled professionals. Karnataka has announced a Rs 10-crore grant to support skilling, research and startup growth in the quantum sector," he said.

(From left) Manjula N, Secretary, Department of Electronics, IT, BT and S&T; Priyank Kharge, Minister for RDPR, Electronics, IT, BT and S&T; NS Boseraju, Minister for Minor Irrigation and Science and Technology; Prof Arindam Ghosh, Convenor, IISc Quantum Technology Initiative, Department of Physics, IISc; and Dr Kiran Kumar AS, former Isro chairman and chairman, at the release of 'From Vision to Reality: Karnataka's Quantum Roadmap in Action' on World Quantum Day, at the Jawaharlal Nehru Planetarium in Bengaluru on Wednesday.
DH PHOTO/BK JANARDHAN

The government also announced the appointment of Professor Arindam Ghosh, Indian Institute of Science (IISc), as chairman of the Karnataka Quantum Task Force.

Priyank Kharge, Minister for IT and BT and Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, said the state has earmarked Rs 400 crore for the coming decade to push deep tech.

Q-City: At a glance

- Brings together academia, startups and industry for quantum technologies
- Aims to translate research into real-world applications
- Plans to build a quantum ecosystem across Karnataka
- Milestones and targets mapped through 2035
- Focus on scalable and sustainable growth

"With equity grants of up to Rs 50 lakh to over 1,300 startups, we have catalysed the venture capital ecosystem to deploy a record Rs 732 crore in a single day. While Bengaluru is the world's fourth-largest tech cluster with over 1,000 global capability centres, we are expanding this growth beyond the city.

"Through the Local Economic Acceleration Program (LEAP) and a Rs 1,000-crore investment, we aim to take the innovation ecosystem across the state," he said.

Early bar openings spark MLA's ire in Rajajinagar

Seeks crackdown on outlets flouting permitted hours

BENGALURU, DHNS

Rajajinagar MLA S Suresh Kumar criticised Excise Minister RB Timmapur over alleged illegal operations at bars and liquor stores, including early opening.

On Wednesday morning, Kumar visited bars serving alcohol to customers during the early hours in his constituency.

"The government is providing youngsters with the opportunity to drink more. Instead of having a cup of coffee or tea in the morning while reading the paper, people are starting their day with liquor as bars are opening as early as 5 am. This is the second time I have caught them doing this," he said.

He urged the minister to crack down on bars and liquor stores operating beyond the prescribed hours.

"Let them carry out their business in a legal manner. It is not right for businesses to operate outside the purview of the restrictions, especially when some of these bars are located in residential areas. It is unsafe for women.

S SURESH KUMAR, Rajajinagar MLA

"The government is providing youngsters with the opportunity to drink more. Instead of having a cup of coffee or tea in the morning while reading the paper, people are starting their day with liquor as bars are opening as early as 5 am. This is the second time I have caught them doing this.

Pressure on minister

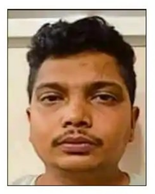
"I urge the minister to take action against these establishments before women are forced to come onto the streets in protest against these bars and liquor stores."

Man pushes 75-year-old paralytic mother off third floor

BENGALURU, DHNS: A man allegedly pushed his 75-year-old paralytic mother off the third floor of a building in RR Nagar, western Bengaluru, on Wednesday, killing her.

Police investigations revealed that 42-year-old Venkatesh carried his mother Savithramma to the top floor of the three-storeyed building and pushed her off.

Savithramma



Venkatesh

Police received an alert about the incident around 10.30 am. A team went to the scene and detained Venkatesh, who was arrested for murder.

Venkatesh, a salesperson, lived with his mother and the rest of the family on the second floor of the building. His mother had been paralytic for five years. He told the police he could not bear to see her suffer every day and decided to end her life.

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Woman killed, husband injured as scooter falls into drainage pit

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 33-year-old woman died and her husband was injured after their scooter fell into a drainage pit near Yadiyur Kere in Chikkajala.

Netravathi and her husband Anil, residents of Arebinnamangala, were returning home around 8.45 pm after buying vegetables at Bagalur Santhe when he attempted to navigate a stretch where drainage work was in progress and pipes had been laid across the road.

Anil lost control of the scooter, causing both to fall into a pit along Arebinnamangala Road.

Netravathi, who was riding pillion, died on the spot due to severe head injuries, while Anil suffered grievous injuries.

Passersby alerted the Chikkajala traffic police, who went to the scene and shifted the body for post-mortem. Police registered a case of negligent driving against Anil, stating that he ignored cautionary measures at the site.

Officials said the BK Halli panchayat had put safety measures in place around the drainage work.

Anil drives a Canter for a living, while Netravathi worked as a housemaid.

Tailoring training

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Shri Dharmasthala Manjunatheshwara Educational Trust, in collaboration with Canara Bank, is inviting applications from rural unemployed women for a 31-day free tailoring (fashion designing) training programme.

The course will commence on May 11 and will be conducted through the RUDSET Institute.

Applicants must be women between 18 and 50 years and should be able to read and write Kannada. Candidates from rural areas must possess either a BPL card or an Aadhaar card. Interested candidates may contact the RUDSET Institute, Arishinakunte, Nelamangala taluk, Bengaluru Rural district, at 9380162042, 9481506564, or 9740982585.

Minor among four arrested for house break-in

BENGALURU, DHNS: A juvenile was among four people arrested in connection with a house break-in in south Bengaluru's Konanakunte, police said.

Acting on two separate cases, police launched an investigation and recovered valuables worth Rs 14 lakh.

During the probe, officers pursued multiple leads and, based on credible inputs, apprehended three suspects on April 5.

"During interrogation, the suspects confessed to committing the thefts along with a juvenile in conflict with law," police said.

The juvenile was subsequently detained and produced before the Juvenile Justice Board, which sent him to a government observation home.

"Further interrogation revealed that the stolen gold ornaments had been sold or pledged through two women known to the accused at jewellery shops in Malleswaram, Netajinagar, Basaveshwaranagar, Kembathahalli and Thigalarapalya," police said.

Based on these inputs, police recovered 113 grams of gold ornaments, worth Rs 14 lakh, from various jewellery shops.

Further investigation is underway.

Four women held for forcing others into prostitution

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Central Crime Branch (CCB) has arrested four women for allegedly forcing four others into prostitution.

Acting on specific intelligence, the CCB's Women Protection Squad raided three rented houses in Manuvana (Vijayanagar), Ramaswamipalya Main Road near Karumariyamma Temple (Banaswadi), and Andrahalli Main Road, Veerabhadreshwara Nagar (Byadarahalli), where the activities were suspected to be taking place.

Raids conducted on different days earlier this week led to the rescue of four women, including two from other states. Four women, alleged to be operating as pimps, were arrested.

"During interrogation, the accused confessed to contacting clients over the phone and inviting them to the houses to carry out prostitution for money," a police statement said.

Cases have been registered at the Vijayanagar, Banaswadi and Byadarahalli police stations.

The accused have been produced before a court and remanded in judicial custody.

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

Fellowship for students: Minister Madhu Bangarappa to attend; MES Arts, Commerce and Science Pre-University College, Malleswaram; 10 am.

CULTURAL

Suchitra Hirannaiah Drama Festival: Inaugural ceremony at 10 am, followed by master class and performances; Suchitra Cinema and Cultural Academy, Banashankari.

Sampravega 2K26: National-Level Inter-Collegiate Fest; Soundarya Institute of Management and Science; Soundarya Layout.

'Shri Krishna Vijaya' Drama Performance: Abhaya Anjaneya Swamy Krupa Poshitha Nataka Mandali, Chaluvanarayanaswamy Krupa Poshitha Nataka Mandali; Ravindra Kalakshetra, JC Road; 2 pm.

88th Sri Ramanavami Music Festival: Sri Rama Seva Mandali Ram Navami Celebration Trust; Kote High School Campus, Chamarajpet; 4.30 pm.

Bharatanatyam performance: Students of Shivalila Music and Dance Academy; Nanjangud Raghavendra Swamy Mutt, Jayanagar; 5.15 pm.

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST

Partly cloudy sky

TEMPERATURES

Maximum	35.8°C
Minimum	23.6°C
Rainfall (as of 8:30 am)	--
Humidity (as of 5:30 pm)	19%
Sunset (April 16)	6:32 pm
Sunrise (April 17)	6:07 am
Moonrise	4:16 am
Moonset	4:37 pm

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

विशेष शाखा, पुलिस मुख्यालय, मध्यप्रदेश भोपाल

क्रमांक :– विशा/स्टोर/2026–24 (175), दिनांक :– 13/4/26

:: संभावित सेवा प्रदाताओं / पात्र एवं सक्षम संविदाकर्ताओं की पहचान सूचीबद्ध करने हेतु विज्ञापन–सूचना (द्वितीय) ::

वित्तीय वर्ष 2026–27 में आगामी एक वर्ष में मरम्मत/रखरखाव, सेवाएँ प्राप्त करने हेतु संभावित सेवा प्रदाताओं/पात्र एवं सक्षम संविदाकर्ताओं की पहचान सूचीबद्ध करने हेतु फर्म निम्नानुसार बिन्दुवार जानकारी इस कार्यालय में दिनांक 22.04.2026. समय 16.00 बजे तक व्यक्तिगत रूप से जमा करें। ई–मेल, डाक द्वारा प्राप्त प्रस्ताव स्वीकार नहीं किए जाएगें।

1–फर्म का नाम, 2– फर्म का पंजीयन प्रमाण पत्र, 3 फर्म का पूरा पत्ता, 4– वार्षिक टर्नओवर, 5– जीएसटी नम्बर, 6 गुमास्ता, 7– शासकीय / अर्धशासकीय संस्था में उपरोक्त कार्य कराने हेतु संबंधी दस्तावेज / अनुभव प्रमाण पत्र, 8– संस्थान, दुकान के फोटोग्राफस ।

मरम्मत/रखरखाव हेतु कार्यालयीन उपकरणों, फर्नीचर, साज–सज्जा लाईटिंग कार्य की जानकारी

०क०	कार्य का प्रकार	उपकरण का नाम
1	समस्त कार्यालयीन उपकरणों के मरम्मत कार्य	कम्प्यूटर रिपेरिंग,, प्रिंटर रिपेरिंग (ब्लेक एण्ड व्हाईट, कलर) फोटोकापी मशीन रिपेरिंग, फेक्स मशीन रिपेरिंग टी.वी रिपेरिंग लेपटाप रिपेरिंग, लेपटाप एप्पल मेक यूपीएस, इन्वर्टर सीलिंग फेन, वालफेन कूलर मरम्मत एसी मरम्मत प्रिंटर कार्टेज रिफलिंग कार्य बायोमेट्रिक मशीन प्रोजेक्टर केबल रिचार्ज
2	कार्यालयीन फर्नीचर मरम्मत कार्य	टेलब, कुर्सी, अलमारी आदि फर्नीचर सुधार कार्य
3	साज सज्जा	राष्ट्रीय त्यौहारों एवं अन्य अवसरों पर शासकीय भवन में साज–सज्जा लाईटिंग कार्य। नवीन इंटीग्रेटेड कमाण्ड कंट्रोल सेंटर श्यामला हिल्स भवन हेतु ।

विस्तृत जानकारी एवं सेवा की सामान्य शर्तें म.प्र. पुलिस बेवसाईट पर उपलब्ध है।

हस्ता/–
उप पुलिस महानिरीक्षक
विशेष शाखा (गुप्तवार्ता), म.प्र. भोपाल

G-11590/26

SPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS

(An Autonomous Body under Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports)

Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium Complex (East Gate-No. 10), Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003

APPLICATIONS FOR APPOINTMENT OF ASSISTANT COACH IN SPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA ON REGULAR BASIS

Sports Authority of India (SAI), an autonomous organization under Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, invites applications from eligible candidates for filling up 323 posts of Assistant Coach (Pay Band of Rs. 9300-34800 +GP Rs. 4200) in 26 disciplines (namely Athletics, Archery, Badminton, Basketball, Boxing, Canoeing & Kayaking, Cycling, Fencing, Football, Gymnastics, Handball, Hockey, Judo, Kabaddi, Kho-Kho, Lawn Tennis, Rowing, Shooting, Swimming, Sepaktakraw, Table Tennis, Taekwondo, Volleyball, Weightlifting, Wrestling and Wushu)

2. The detailed notification including eligibility criteria etc. are available on the website of SAT (www.sportsauthorityofindia.nic.in)
3. Opening date for online registration of application is **23.03.2026 (10:00 AM)**
4. The last date of submission of online application is **21.04.2026 (05:00 PM)**

CBC 47103/12/0003/2627 ED-HRD, SAI

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: support@deccanherald.co.in

S. E. RAILWAY – TENDER

Tender Notice No. : e-Tender/2026/12, dated 13.04.2026. e-Tenders are invited by Divisional Railway Manager (Engg), S.E.Railway, Kharagpur-721301 for and on behalf of the President of India for the following works **before 15.00 hrs.** on the date mentioned against items and will be **opened at 15.30 hrs.** : **Sl. No. & Tender No.; Description of work; Tender Value; Earnest Money : (1) E-KGP-East-15-2026;** Construction of (03 Nos.) New 6.00 mtr. wide Foot Over Bridge at Narayan Pakuria Murail, Bhogpur & Nandaigajan Stations under the jurisdiction of Sr. Divisional Engineer (East), Kharagpur; ₹ 13,43,74,998.98; ₹ 26,87,500/-. **(2) E-KGP-East-18-2026;** (1) Construction of 2 Nos. Gates Goomty on Level Crossing No. HA-4, HA-7 in Howrah - Amta section. (2) Construction of Santragachi Store building at Santragachi Coaching Depot under the jurisdiction of Sr. Divisional Engineer (East)/Kharagpur; ₹ 3,34,28,457.80; ₹ 6,68,600/-. **(3) E-KGP-East-19-2026;** Howrah - Kharagpur: Provision of wash room cum changing room, rest room etc. for female employees at working place under the jurisdiction of Sr.Divisional Engineer/East/Kharagpur; ₹ 1,53,35,583.62; ₹ 3,06,700/-. **Tender Document Cost :** 0.00 for each. **Completion period of the work :** 12 Months for each. **Date of opening :** 30.04.2026 for sl. no. 1 and 07.05.2026 for **sl.** no. 2 & 3. **Bidding start Date :** From 16.04.2026 and upto 15.00 hrs. on 30.04.2026 for sl. no. 1 and From 23.04.2026 and upto 15.00 hrs. on 07.05.2026 for sl. no. 2 & 3. Interested Tenderers may visit website **www.ireps.gov.in** for full details/descriptions/specifications of the tenders and submit their bids online. In no case manual tenders for these works will be accepted. **N.B.** Prospective bidders may regularly visit **www.ireps.gov.in** to participate in all tenders. **(PR-51)**

SPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEPARTMENT OF SPORTS

(An Autonomous Body under Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports)

(Human Resources Division -II)

Head Office, Gate No.10 (east Gate), Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003

F.No. 01-04001 (03)/1/2026-6601/233 Date: 25-03-2026

Sports Authority of India Recruitment - Assistant Director Posts on Deputation

The Sports Authority of India (SAI), an autonomous body under the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, invites applications for 30 posts of Assistant Director in Pay Matrix Level-10 on deputation basis for a period of 01 year (further extendable upto three years in a cycle of one year at a time, subject to requirement and availability of vacancies in the borrowing department) at its Head Office, New Delhi and various field units. Eligible officers may submit applications in the prescribed format, along with required documents, to the Director (Human Resources Division-I), SAI, J.N. Stadium Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003. Last date for receipt of applications is 22-04-2026 (5:00 PM). Detailed advertisement, eligibility criteria, proforma and instructions will be available on the SAI website (www.sportsauthorityofindia.nic.in),

CBC 47103/12/0001/2627

राष्ट्रीय परीक्षा एजेंसी
National Testing Agency
Excellence in Assessment
IIM BODH GAYA
IIM JAMMU

Online Applications Form for Joint Integrated Program in Management Admission Test (JIPMAT) -2026

The National Testing Agency (NTA) will be conducting the JIPMAT-2026 for admission to 5-year Integrated Program in Management at IIM Bodh Gaya and IIM Jammu for the academic year 2026 27, as per following details:

Submission of Online Applications Form	**16 April 2026 to 10 May 2026 (upto 11:50 PM)**
Last date for successful transaction of Examination fee	**11 May 2026 (upto 11:50 PM)**
Correction in Particulars	**12-14 May 2026 (upto 11:50 PM)**
Date of exam	**07 June 2026**
Timing of exam	**03:00 PM to 05:30 PM**
Mode of exam	**Computer Based Test CBT)**
Paper pattern	**Multiple Choice questions**

Scheme/duration/medium/syllabus of examination, eligibility criteria, tentative intake, reservation of seals, exam cities, important dates, etc., arc mentioned in the Information Bulletin hosted on NTA website https://exams.nta.nic.in/jipmat/. Candidates who desire to appear in the exam may read the detailed Information Bulletin for JIPMAT - 2026 and apply online only at https://exams.nta.nic.in/jipmat/. Applicants should check the eligibility criteria of the respective IIMs. Candidates are advised to be in touch with the NTA website https://exams.nta.nic.in/jipmat/ Candidates can write to NTA at jipmat@nta.ac.in or call NTA at 011-40759000.

CBC 21354/11/0001/2627 Sd/- Director

NFDC
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CIN - U92100MH1975GOI022994

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(Direct recruitment / Immediate absorption)

APPLY ONLINE
Visit: www.nfdcindia.com
Apply on or before 29th May 2026 up to 6:00 PM

CBC 22105/12/007/2627

Khata freeze hits Jigani pvt layout; buyers in limbo

Allege irregularities and bribe demands

NAVEEN MENEZES
BENGALURU, DHNS

Hundreds of property owners in Jigani are in shock after the Anekal Planning Authority (APA), which falls under the Bangalore Metropolitan Region Development Authority (BMRDA), ordered a halt on the issuance of khatas for a private layout, citing irregularities in earlier approvals and compliance gaps.

The directive, issued on January 6, applies to a layout called UR Castles, located in Nosenuru village of Haragaddegram panchayat.

While the BMRDA had approved the layout — spread across 33 acres and covering several survey numbers — in 2010 and 2015, officials have now instructed the panchayat not to process khata applications until further review. This effectively freezes all property transactions in the layout.

In its order, the authority noted that the layout has deviated from the sanctioned plans. It also cited the need to align with a BMRDA directive issued in November 2020, suggesting that earlier clearances may not fully comply with current regulatory requirements.

In the same order, the Anekal Planning Authority directed its officials to pause all khata issuance in the layout, re-examine approvals, land conversion status and compliance, and ensure adherence to planning norms before clearing cases.

The authority has not indicated how long the freeze will last, raising concerns among residents.

According to documents, the BMRDA initially allowed the developer to sell 40% of the total sites. Even before the layout was substantially developed, the authority permitted the sale of the remaining 60% by "unreleasing" the 40% that had earlier been restricted. Eventually, the developer sold all the sites before fully completing the layout.

Aravind Jayaram, a site owner in the layout, said that while officials in the past facilitated the sale of undeveloped sites, a different set of officials is now creating hurdles by not processing khata requests.

"Our layout has received DC conversion and approvals, but brokers are now quoting Rs 1.5 lakh per khata, citing the Anekal Planning Authority's letter," he said.

He added that the panchayat had already issued khatas to some owners who allegedly paid bribes, even though their sites are still undeveloped.

"Legitimate buyers who purchased sites based on valid approvals are now being asked to pay an exorbitant bribe to obtain khata," he alleged.

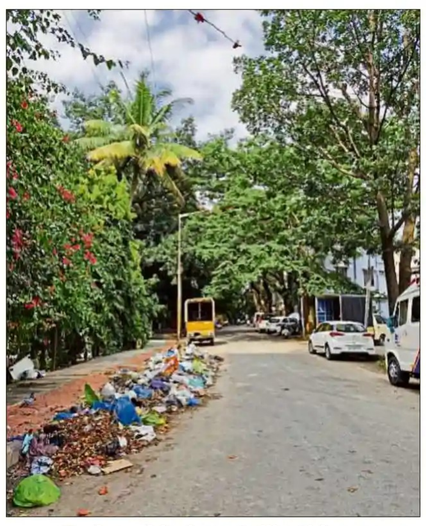
Officials were not available for comment.

Why transactions are frozen in the layout

- Deviations from the originally sanctioned layout plan
- Need to align with a November 2020 BMRDA directive
- Earlier approvals may not meet current compliance norms

TRASH TALK

South Bengaluru's clean image takes a hit as garbage complaints pile up



Garbage black spots like this on Contour Road, opposite the Co-operative Training College, have become common in the Padmanabha Nagar ward due to irregular waste collection.
DH PHOTO/HITA PRAKASH

620 complaints and counting; Padmanabha Nagar worst ward; Mahadevapura tech hub close behind

BENGALURU, DHNS

A product designer based in Bengaluru launched a digital platform called 'Namma Kasa' earlier this month, inviting citizens to report garbage blackspots along with their location.

The response was telling.

Padmanabha Nagar ward, which falls under the constituency of Leader of Opposition R Ashoka, has emerged as the worst ward for garbage complaints, dispelling the common perception that South Bengaluru is uniformly clean.

The platform received 620 complaints, with pictures of uncleared garbage on roads.

Padmanabha Nagar topped the list. Residents of South Bengaluru were not surprised.

They noted that door-to-door garbage collection in the ward is irregular and garbage spots are widespread.

"There have been instances when the garbage vehicle does not come for 20 days in a row. While some residents use wet waste for composting, others have started throwing it next to someone else's home. It is a nuisance and complaints are not taken seriously," a resident of Contour Road said.

Garbage spots in Padmanabha Nagar are seen not just on interior roads, but also on major roads and traffic junctions.

Mahadevapura no better

The Mahadevapura assembly constituency has posted the worst performance across several wards, including Hoodi, Marathahalli, Doddakannelli, Munnekolala and Balathur.

A major share of the total complaints has come from the tech hub, which is also grappling with poor roads, parks and playgrounds.

Other wards that fared badly are Hennur, Horamavu and JP Nagar.

While Hennur and Horamavu come under the KR Puram assembly constituency, JP Nagar falls under the Jayanagar assembly segment.

Poor-performing wards across constituencies

- **Mahadevapura (worst-hit constituency):** Hoodi, Marathahalli, Doddakannelli, Munnekolala, Balathur
- **Other poorly performing wards:** Hennur, Horamavu (KR Puram), JP Nagar (Jayanagar)

From complaint to cleanup

Jyothish VM, who developed the 'Namma Kasa' platform, said the idea was to bring visibility to the garbage problem so that complaints were attended to.

"There is so much garbage lying around and many citizens do not know how to report it. By building 'Namma Kasa', I want to provide a platform so that authorities will be able to clear them. I can also share the data to the civic body if it helps them," he said.

Census houselisting begins today

GBA deploys 26,000 staff

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has launched a citywide door-to-door houselisting exercise under the National Census 2027, deploying over 26,000 personnel across five municipal corporations.

According to a press note, 23,700 enumerators and 2,900 supervisors — a total of 26,616 personnel — have been mobilised for the first phase, starting April 16.

The exercise will cover all households in the GBA area through physical visits by authorised officials.

Among the five corporations, Bengaluru West has been assigned the highest number of staff (7,447), followed by Bengaluru South (5,734), Bengaluru North (4,996), Bengaluru Central (4,586), and Bengaluru East (3,854).

Officials said the large deployment is aimed at ensuring comprehensive and accurate coverage.

The authority has urged residents, apartment associations, and property owners to cooperate by providing accurate information and facilitating access to premises.

Public participation

It reiterated that participation in the census is a national duty and essential for planning and governance.

Citing provisions of the Census Act, 1948, the GBA said furnishing information is mandatory and warned that refusal or obstruction could invite penal action.

Q-commerce firm fined Rs 80,000 for dumping garbage on roadside

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Bengaluru North City Corporation has levied a Rs 80,000 penalty on quick commerce firm Blinkit for dumping garbage on the road.

In a statement, the corporation said waste was dumped along Railway Parallel Road in Byatarayanapura. "During inspection, it was found that a private entity (Blinkit) had illegally dumped garbage in a public place. Based on this violation, a penalty of Rs 80,000 has been imposed on the entity."

BNCC Commissioner Pommala Sunil Kumar warned of strict action for repeat violations, stressing that illegal dumping harms public health and the environment and that the corporation will enforce a zero-tolerance policy.

97 employees fall ill after suspected canteen food poisoning

BENGALURU, DHNS: In a suspected case of food poisoning at a private company canteen in north Bengaluru's Devanahalli, 97 employees fell ill and were hospitalised.

The employees reported abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhoea and other symptoms consistent with food poisoning.

According to Dr Krishna Reddy, Bengaluru Rural District Health Officer, the affected employees had eaten at the office canteen and were admitted to two private hospitals.

No casualties have been reported, he added.

Samples of the leftover food have been sent for testing and results are awaited, Reddy said.

Employees said they had idli and vada for breakfast, and rice with sambar for lunch on Tuesday.

Many began experiencing symptoms by Tuesday night, with several requiring hospitalisation by Wednesday morning.

Officials said the patients were treated with intravenous fluids to stabilise their condition.

MATCH DAY RUSH

Crowds, chaos & crackdown at IPL match venue

BENGALURU, DHNS

Traffic congestion around the M Chinnaswamy Stadium disrupted vehicular movement for a couple of hours on Wednesday, as fans turned up for the IPL match between Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) and Lucknow Super Giants (LSG).

Commuters faced difficulty booking cabs and autorickshaws, with wait time exceeding 10 minutes, compared to the usual 2 to 4 minutes.

Many auto drivers refused trips or demanded double the fare, citing heavy crowds and traffic at the Cubbon Park metro station and Anil Kumble Circle.

Black marketing of match tickets was reported near the Cubbon Park police station, about 100 metres away.

Central Crime Branch (CCB) sleuths detained a couple of suspects and seized tickets that were being sold for Rs 9,000 to Rs 10,000.

Phone seized

In a separate case, a person claiming to be a cricket academy staff member was questioned after police found multiple e-tickets on his mobile phone. He said the tickets were booked in advance for Australian nationals. However, CCB officials seized his phone to verify the transactions.

Police also took into custody over 30 people from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, including women, for selling T-shirts and painting RCB logos on fans' faces, allegedly causing inconvenience around the stadium and on footpaths.

They were made to sit at the station till the match ended and later released after a warning.

Police tightened security around Cubbon Park, the stadium and Anil Kumble Circle to prevent any untoward incidents.

Many spectators were seen waiting outside the gates for a long time as friends and family members carrying tickets were stuck in traffic across the CBD areas.

Fans get their faces painted in team colours, while the buzz begins outside the stadium.

Fans gather outside the M Chinnaswamy Stadium ahead of the clash between Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) and Lucknow Super Giants (LSG).
DH PHOTOS/PUSHKAR V

At 44ºC, village near K'buragi sees highest temp in country

KALABURAGI, DHNS: Aurad village in Kalaburagi taluk and Akola (Vidarbha region of Maharashtra) recorded a temperature of 44 degrees Celsius on Tuesday, highest in country.

India meteorological department scientist Lata Sridhar said this was also the highest temperature recorded in Karnataka till April 15 during summer over the last 16 years. The state had witnessed 44.01 degree Celsius temperature on April 15, 2010. A yellow alert has been issued for Kalaburagi, Bidar, Vijayapura, Bagalkot and Belagavi districts from April 15 to 17 as north interior Karnataka faces intense heatwave conditions, with temperatures expected to hover around 42 and 44 degrees Celsius.

Municipal Corporations in the region have taken several measures to protect people from excess heatwave. Officials have arranged shade facilities with green nets at traffic signals in Ballari, Kalaburagi, Vijayapura and other cities which are expected to see further rise in temperature.

Kalaburagi Deputy Commissioner B Fouzia Tarannum has advised people to avoid going outdoors, especially between 12 noon and 4 pm. Farmers and agricultural workers should use a hat or an umbrella in addition to putting a wet cloth on the head, neck, face and limbs if there is a situation where they have to work outside. "Do not leave children or pets in parked vehicles," the DC said in a press release.

56% quota among demands in CM's petition to PM

Seeks nod for Mahadayi, Mekedatu, national project tag for Upper Bhadra

BENGALURU, DHNS

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday gave Prime Minister Narendra Modi a list of 18 demands, which included bringing the state's 56% reservation under the 9th Schedule of the Constitution.

Siddaramaiah gave the petition when he received Modi at the HAL airport.

The quantum of reservations was hiked to 56% when the Basavaraj Bommai-led BJP government was in power, breaching the 50% ceiling fixed by the Supreme Court. It is widely believed that the quota hike will be protected from judicial review if included in the 9th Schedule. Siddaramaiah also asked Modi to include some OBCs in the central list of Scheduled Tribes, including the Kuruba community to which the CM belongs. "The state has already provided the necessary clarifications addressing earlier objections," the petition stated.

The petition also sought the revival of a railway coach factory at Kolar and a high-speed Bengaluru-Mysuru rail.

Modi was urged to "expedite the release of committed central assistance for the Bengaluru Suburban Rail Project and to initiate the Bengaluru–Mumbai High-Speed Rail Corridor, connecting key districts of Kittur Karnataka and Kalyana Karnataka."

The state has sought approvals for the Mekedatu and Mahadayi projects. It also asked for federal funding and 'national project' status for the Upper Bhadra Project. It has asked for a gazette notification on the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II award.

"Karnataka has always taken pride in contributing to India's growth with responsibility and vision. However, recurring delays in approvals and financial releases have created a perception of systemic inequity," Siddaramaiah stated.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has a word with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah upon landing at the HAL airport in Bengaluru on Wednesday. The PM later proceeded for an event at Adichunchanagiri Mutt in Nagamangala taluk in Mandya district.

Other demands

- Pending central share of Rs 17,554 crore under Jal Jeevan Mission.
- Pending grants of Rs 2,860 crore for gram panchayats under 15th Finance Commission.
- Sanction and upgradation of National Highway projects.
- Revenue deficit grants of Rs 5,495 crore as recommended by 15th Finance Commission.
- Special grant of Rs 6,000 crore for Bengaluru.
- Allocation of at least 40–45 tmc under Godavari–Cauvery and Bedthi–Varada river linking projects.
- Dedicated annual financial support of Rs 5,000 crore to Kalyana Karnataka.
- Expedited clearances for the Sharavathy Pumped Storage Project.
- Establishment of AIIMS in Raichur.

Adichunchanagiri seer Nirmalanandanatha Swami and Swami Paramatmananda Saraswathi felicitate Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the inauguration of Bhairavaikya Mandira at Adichunchanagiri in Nagamangala taluk of Mandya district on Wednesday. Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy and Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka look on.

DH PHOTO/ANUP RAGHT

Modi's call for nine vows towards Viksit Bharat

Says millets in diet can help tackle obesity

ADICHUNCHANAGIRI (MANDYA DISTRICT), DHNS

Referring to the nine principles of Sri Adichunchanagiri Mutt for inclusive development, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the path to Viksit (developed) Bharat would be practical and easy if people fulfil nine vows.

After inaugurating Guru Bhairavaikya Mandira at Adichunchanagiri Kshetra, Nagamangala taluk, Mandya district, on Wednesday, Modi avoided any political talk.

The Mandira is a memorial for the late seer of the Mutt Balagangadharanatha Swami, who served from September 24, 1974, to January 13, 2013. Earlier, Modi arrived by a helicopter at Tapovana in Adichunchanagiri and visited Jwalapeetha, where Guru Gorakhnath was in penance centuries ago. He also offered prayers at the Kalabhairava temple.

Modi stressed on the need to take nine vows of saving and conserving water; planting a tree in the name of one's mother; maintaining cleanliness in public places; using Swadeshi products and services for a Athmanirbhar Bharat; domestic tourism for enjoying the beauty of our nation; chemical-free natural farming; healthy food, with millets and less oil; making yoga, sports and fitness a part of life; and service to the needy. Modi lauded former prime minister H D Deve Gowda for popularising 'ragi mudde' (finger millet balls) and said millets in our diet could help tackle the biggest challenge of obesity.

The PM said there were just a few surviving ancient civilisations and Bharat was one of them.

"The Mutt, with a legacy of nearly 2,000 years, is connected with the society all the time. Similarly, the vision of our government is to reach the people at their doorsteps. Our Ayushman Bharat scheme tries to give better healthcare in a respectable manner," he said.

Conservation

Elaborating on the efforts of the mutt and its seers to conserve peacocks, Modi said Adichunchanagiri was a rare peacock sanctuary. "Besides environmental conservation, peacocks, our national bird, are related to our culture due to their importance in our religion and spirituality," he added.

He said the Adichunchangiri Mutt was propagating both philosophy, which gives depth, and technology, which gives strength to the society. "While Balagangadharanatha Swami took service to new heights, Nirmalanandanatha Swami has given a momentum for inclusive growth," the PM added.

Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot, former prime minister H D Deve Gowda, seer Nirmalanandanatha Swami, Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy and Shobha Karandlaje among others were present.

PM visit to Mutt could boost BJP's Vokkaliga outreach

PRATHIMA NANDAKUMAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 'Sri Guru Bhairavaikya Mandir' - the resting place of Balagangadharanatha Swami, 71st pontiff of Adichunchanagiri Mutt in Mandya, on Wednesday.

The event hinted at BJP's growing proximity to the powerful Vokkaliga Mutt, a key factor in the party's renewed push to breach its last major electoral bastion - the Old Mysuru region dominated by the Vokkaliga community.

The mutt with a 1800-year-old unbroken spiritual lineage shares its "Nath Pantha", a Shaivite sub-tradition, with Gorakhnath Mutt in Uttar Pradesh (where UP CM Yogi Adityanath was the head priest). Modi acknowledging the mutt as a civilisational anchor paid tribute to the late pontiff and his model of leadership rooted in seva - education, healthcare, and compassion.

He also invoked the local symbols of pride - Maa Cauvery (river) to push for water conservation, gave call to the agrarian community to shift to chemical-free natural farming and to adopt a healthy lifestyle and millet-based foods to combat obesity, also citing how Deve Gowda, the tallest Vokkaliga leader popularised 'ragi mudde'.

Amid a cheering crowd, Modi referred to Mandya as "Sakkare Nagara Madhura Mandya," celebrating the region's prosperity and the "sweetness, hospitality and warmth" of its people.

The PM attending the event amid his busy schedule of campaigning in poll-bound West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, and the upcoming special session of the Parliament on women's reservation bill, signals political recognition of the mutt's influence in the region.

The Old Mysuru belt, with 59 Assembly seats, is traditionally the stronghold of the Janata Dal (Secular) led by former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda and Union minister H D Kumaraswamy. The BJP–JD(S) alliance would be a force multiplier in the 2028 Assembly polls helping the saffron party overcome its persistent seat shortfall to attain majority.

The current pontiff, Nirmalanandanatha Swami, alumnus of IIT Chennai, was a special invitee for 'Bhoomi puja' of Ram temple at Ayodhya (2020) and consecration of Ram temple in 2024. The soil and water from the Kalabhairaveshwara temple in Mandya were sent to Ayodhya for Bhoomi puja too. Recently, the mutt hosted 'Sant Samagam' organised by VHP and attended by RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. This time, the pontiff recalled Modi inaugurating the 108-ft-tall statue of Nadaprabhu Kempegowda at the Bengaluru airport in 2022.

The BJP's outreach combines religious symbolism with caste identity politics. However, the mutt has maintained neutrality. In 2023, the seer backed KPCC chief D K Shivakumar for chief minister's post, responding to community sentiment. Also, he chastised BJP leaders for planning a movie on Uri Gowda and Nanje Gowda, who, BJP claimed, had killed Tipu Sultan, dismissing it as "unverified historical claim" that could hurt the community.

CBSE class 10 results: Bengaluru region records 98.9% pass

BENGALURU, DHNS: In an impressive display of consistency, Bengaluru Region managed to emulate its 2025 performance in the CBSE class ten examinations again this year, with 98.9% of the students clearing the exams. It is to be noted that all CBSE-affiliated schools in state are clubbed under Bengaluru Region.

B'luru Region's performance saw it bag the third slot in the national rankings, trailing Trivandrum and Vijayawada, both of which achieved a 99.79% pass percentage in the first place, and Chennai (99.58%) in the second.

Compared to the 2025 results, the national pass percentage shot up by 0.04% this year. More importantly, the results were declared considerably earlier this time around – in 2025, students had to wait till the first week of May to learn their fate. However, with CBSE having scheduled the second session of the examinations in May, the results for the first session, wherein students had to appear in at least three subjects, were announced early.

In all, around 9% of the students – 2,21,754 – have secured over 90% in the exams, among whom 55,368 have scored more than 95%. The CBSE made it clear that there would be no merit list, nor lists classifying results in the first, second and third divisions. Rather, merit certificates will be issued to 0.1% of the top scorers.

Kalvi Jayeetha

Bapathu Tarunya

Of the 1,01,660 students who appeared for the examinations from the Bengaluru Region, 1,00,554 cleared the test, with girls outshining the boys. While 54,023 of the 54,864 boys who appeared for the exams cleared them, 46,531 of the 46,796 girls managed to ace the exams. Several CBSE-affiliated schools in the state registered a 100% pass percentage, while many students scored 99% or above. Two students from the Bengaluru-based Sri Chaitanya Techno School scored 499/500.

Kalvi Jayeetha, one of the two students, credited her success to studying five hours every day. She added, "I want to pursue science and prepare for JEE so I can get into IIT, where I want to study Artificial Intelligence, Computer Science or Aerospace Engineering." Bapathu Tarunya from Sri Chaitanya Techno School who secured 499/500.

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Protests against 'arbitrary' deletion of voter names in SIR exercise

BENGALURU, DHNS: Protests were held across Karnataka on Wednesday against the alleged arbitrary deletion of voter names from electoral rolls under the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process. The demonstrations were organised by 'My Vote, My Right', a coalition of civil society groups, unions and activists, which labelled the exercise a "violation of democratic principles."

Protests took place in many districts, including Bengaluru, Bidar, Kodagu, Udupi, Mysuru, Raichur, Vijayanagar, Koppal, Kalaburagi, Belagavi and Tumakuru. In Bengaluru, a group of 30, consisting of lawyers, activists and other citizens, gathered in front of Vidhana Soudha, raising slogans and pledging to defend political equality, the group said in a statement.

The protesters cited large-scale voter deletions across states. The coalition urged Karnataka to take a strong stand against SIR and sought the Supreme Court's intervention in the matter.

Bypoll sabotage row: I wasn't partying in Kerala, says Zameer

CM takes stock of developments surrounding D'gere South bypoll

BENGALURU, DHNS

On a day full of hectic political activities in the governing Congress, Housing Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan defended himself Wednesday against allegations that he tried to cause the party's defeat in the April 9 Davangere South bypoll.

After meeting Congress MLC Naseer Ahmed, who was sacked as the chief minister's political secretary, Zameer said he could not devote much time for canvassing in Davangere South as he was designated as 'star campaigner' in Kerala.

"I didn't go to Kerala for a party, or on a holiday. I was the star campaigner. I was there doing party work," Zameer said on allegations that he deliberately did not spend time in Davangere South where Muslim votes are decisive.

"I visited Davangere South on April 5 because Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had announced that I'd campaign there on that day. On April 6 and 7, I went to Bagalkot," he said. The minister said he met Ahmed and consoled him.

"He's hurting. He's the senior-most Muslim leader in the party. Even I'm hurt that he faced action," Zameer said.

When asked if some of his party colleagues are jealous of his quick rise in Congress, Zameer said: "I'm not trying to be a (Muslim) leader. I'm just a common party worker."

Zameer, who was with the JD(S), joined Congress in 2018. "I have never done caste or community politics. I believe that a politician, especially those who are elected, shouldn't do that," he said.

"The narrative that I'm being targeted is only in the media."

During the day, CM Siddaramaiah met Horticulture Minister S S Mallikarjun, whose son Samarth was the Congress' candidate for the April 9 Davangere South bypoll.

Muslim leaders from Davangere such as Sadiq Pailwan and Dadu Sait also met the CM.

It is said that Siddaramaiah was briefed on all developments surrounding the Davangere South bypoll.

Government Chief Whip Saleem Ahmed and Shivajinagar MLA Rizwan Arshad, who publicly claimed that attempts were made by some Muslim Congressmen to sabotage the party's prospects in Davangere South, also met Siddaramaiah.

B Z ZAMEER AHMED KHAN
Housing minister

"I didn't go to Kerala for a party, or on a holiday. I was the star campaigner. I was there doing party work. I visited Davangere South on April 5 because CM Siddaramaiah had announced that I'd campaign there on that day. On April 6 and 7, I went to Bagalkot.

PU results not magic, just systemic reforms: Madhu

PRATHIMA NANDAKUMAR
BENGALURU DHNS

The II PUC results this year recorded the highest passing percentage (86.48%) in the state's history. School Education Minister S Madhu Bangarappa credits a series of systemic reforms – from plugging mass copying through webcasting to early teacher deployment, standardised preparatory exams and extensive use of question banks for the achievement.

Madhu Bangarappa

In an exclusive interaction with *DH*, Madhu Bangarappa shared his journey as a first-time minister handling a portfolio assigned to him by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, who, he said, hoped to see him turn around the department that impacted the lives of one crore students.

"First, I stopped mass copying through webcasting to know where we stand. Next, I ensured guest teachers were in place from the start of the academic year – June 1, which made early syllabus completion possible," he said, adding that the department set a December deadline for syllabus completion.

For the first time, preparatory exams were standardised at the state level instead of being set locally. "Students were exposed to board-level difficulty early. Teachers could identify weak areas and correct them," he said. The introduction of comprehensive question banks — graded for pass, average and distinction levels — further helped students prepare thoroughly.

Teacher training and a cascading "resource person" model ensured uniform delivery of reforms across classrooms, he said. "Policies must reach the last teacher. Only then do they reach the child."

A mega parent-teacher meeting was launched statewide on Children's Day. "Parents have to be made aware and responsible," he said.

Defending the controversial move to reduce pass marks from 35 to 33, he argued it improved employability. "States sending students for nursing courses in Karnataka have 30 as the pass mark. For most jobs today, PUC is mandatory. So, we decided to give our students equal opportunity. Only about 5,500 students passed between 30–35 marks — over 95% scored above 35."

"Reforms have yielded measurable gains. Students failing in all subjects dropped from about 30,000 last year to 1,770 this year, while performance improved across categories, including SC/ST, OBC and minorities. Boys recorded a 26% improvement," he added, while girls continued to lead overall.

The government also introduced evening special classes by ensuring free power and water in schools, and focused on improving the grades.

Looking ahead, he said, "At higher performance levels, growth stabilises. Next year will be steady or slightly better."

Scan QR code to watch interview

He hopes to introduce the State Education Policy soon. "Budgetary allocation to education has risen from Rs 33,000 crore to about Rs 45,000 crore. I am confident of mobilising CSR funds and expanding Karnataka Public Schools."

Don't take minorities for granted: Liberal group warns Congress

BENGALURU, DHNS

Eddelu Karnataka, a liberal civil society collective, has slammed Congress for 'retaliatory actions' against minority leaders and warned that the party would lose support in future elections.

"The developments in Davangere serve as a warning bell for the 2028 elections. Davangere is clearly saying: do not take minorities, Dalits, secular people and progressive forces for granted," the group said in a statement.

Eddelu Karnataka contributed to the Congress' victory in the 2023 Assembly polls by consolidating 'secular' votes against the BJP.

In its statement, Eddelu Karnataka said Shamanur Shivashankarappa, a Lingayat, was the Congress MLA for three decades in Davangere South despite a significant Muslim population there.

"After (Shamanur's) demise, the Congress leadership had assured that this seat would be given to the Muslim community," Eddelu Karnataka said.

"However, the way the Congress high command and state leadership bowed down before the power of family, caste, and money has disgusted everyone," the group said.

This 'opportunistic stance' of Congress made Muslim leaders and 'secular forces' stayed away from the election, the statement said. "Whatever the result may be the Congress has already suffered a moral defeat," it said.

"When influential families in Davangere openly called for voting for BJP's Raghavendra on caste lines, Congress leaders took no action. But now, they are trying to suppress minority leaders and create divisions among them on baseless grounds. This is shameful," Eddelu Karnataka said.

Kannada and culture dept announces awards; 'Pampa' award for Devanuru

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Kannada and Culture Department on Wednesday announced various awards for the year 2025–26.

Devanuru Mahadeva

Siddaramaiah Sharanaru Beldal of Basava Yogashrama at Koutha (B), Basavakalyan, Bidar district, has been selected for the 'Basava National Award', while Bhanukeerthi Bhattaraka Swami of the Jain Mutt at Kambadahalli in Mandya district has been chosen for the 'Bhagwan Mahaveer Peace National Award'.

Both awards carry a cash prize of Rs 10 lakh each.

Writer Devanuru Mahadeva (Mysuru) has been selected for the 'Pampa Award'.

Progressive thinker Siddanagouda Patil (Dharwad) has been chosen for the 'Sangolli Rayanna Award', social activist K Neela (Kalaburagi) for the 'Akkamahadevi Award', and writer Prof S G Siddaramaiah (Tumakuru) for the 'Kayakayogi Sri Siddarameshwara Award'.

Writer Allabaksh Mirasaheb Mirji (Vijayapura) has been selected for the 'Prof K G Kundanagar Gadinada Sahitya Prashasthi', writer Sukanya Maruti (Ballari) for the 'Daan Chintamani Attimabbe Award', artiste G V Sharada (Tumakuru) for the 'Dr Gubbi Veeranna Award', theatre personality Prasanna (Shivamogga) for the 'B V Karanth Award', and writer Gangaram Chandala (Kolar) for the 'Dr Siddalingaiah Literary Award'.

In the art category, V Hariram (Bengaluru) has been chosen for the 'Varna Shilpi Venkatappa Award', Ashok Gudigar (Shivamogga) for the 'Jakanachari Award', and folk artistes M Mahadevaswamy (Mandya) and B Lakshman (Yadgir) for the 'Janapada Shri Award'.

In the music and dance category, Kallinatha Shastri (Gadag) has been selected for the 'Kumaravyasa Award', and Pratibha Prahlad (Mysuru) for the 'Shantala Natyarani Award'.

These awards carry a cash prize of Rs 5 lakh each.

Kannada and Culture Minister Shivaraj Tangadagi said that the award ceremony would be held soon after fixing a date in consultation with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

Car ploughs into procession; 1 dead

CHIKKAMAGALURU, DHNS: A seven-year-old girl was killed and seven people were injured after a car ploughed into an Ambedkar Jayanti procession in Bilekallu village on Tuesday night.

Seven others, including a girl, were injured in the incident. The deceased girl was identified as Saanvi (7), daughter of Harish and Chandrakala from Indavara village.

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Quota push masks federal power shift

The holding of a special parliamentary session from April 16 to 18 to pass amendments to the Women's Reservation Act, 2023, and effect a delimitation of electoral constituencies raises questions about the government's political intent and its impact on parliamentary representation and India's federal construct. The Women's Reservation Bill was passed in 2023; the government then said it would be implemented after the next population census. The census process has started now, and the reason for the hurried move to implement the Act in 2029, reportedly based on the 2011 census, is unclear. Linking women's representation to the census itself lacked a strong rationale. It could have been aimed at taking credit for the law ahead of the 2024 general elections, without actually implementing it. The timing of and the reasoning for the present move lack a credible explanation. Two states with women as a key voter base will hold Assembly elections this month. Does the government's move not violate the model code of conduct?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has described the move as a "historic step" and sought the support of all political parties. While most parties are likely to back women's reservation, it is noteworthy that the government has not consulted them on introducing the amendment or convinced them of the need for the present haste. Legislation of such importance requires alignment across political parties, both inside and outside Parliament. The government should avoid creating a situation where opposition parties feel forced into compliance or are perceived as obstructing or opposing women's empowerment. Endorsing the idea of women's reservation should not mean accepting the government's political objectives.

The haste to link women's reservation with delimitation raises questions about political intent

It is concerning that women's reservation is being linked, incomprehensibly, to the delimitation exercise. The delimitation of constituencies has been frozen since 1976. It has been reported that the number of seats in parliament will be increased by 50%, based on the 2011 population. A redrawing of constituencies at the national level based on the present population will be to the advantage of North Indian states and will adversely impact South Indian states, where there has been a demographic decline. Delimitation is not a mere numerical rearrangement of seats; it involves a redistribution and rebalancing of political power. The exercise should be set in motion after detailed consultation with states, political parties, and civil society. It should not be imposed on the country in a three-day parliament session. Women's reservation should not be used to sugar-coat the bitter delimitation pill.

Missing toilets: An ODF reality

Karnataka's claim of being Open Defecation Free (ODF), and even a model for other states, sits uneasily with conditions on the ground. A recent survey by ActionAid Karnataka Projects lays bare this contradiction. In Chikkodi taluk of Belagavi district, over 50% of Scheduled Caste (SC) households surveyed had no toilets, despite the district being declared ODF more than seven years ago. In several villages, even community toilets are absent. For women forced to defecate in the open, this translates into indignity and risk. This is not merely a failure of infrastructure but a reminder of how aggregated success can conceal entrenched inequities. SCs and STs, already at the margins of social and economic life, appear to have been left behind in the sanitation drive. The persistence of open defecation in these communities reflects not only gaps in implementation but also the state's inability to address structural disadvantages – cramped housing, irregular water supply, and poor awareness of entitlements.

The government's assertion of 100% ODF status must, therefore, be treated with scepticism. Such claims rest heavily on administrative reporting and self-declaration, often without rigorous, independent verification. When half the households in a vulnerable segment lack toilets, the credibility of these figures is inevitably called into question. The location of this gap is equally telling. Belagavi, the state's largest district, is not politically marginal. It has long been dominated by influential political families – the Jarkiholis, Kattis, Hebbalkars, Jolles, Kores, and Savadis – whose members have held power across party lines and governments. Such basic deficits in a politically well-represented region underscore the disconnect between political influence and equitable development. It also raises serious questions about the gaps that may exist in more backward districts with far less political visibility. This is unacceptable for a state that boasts of a robust GSDP and high per capita income.

Survey findings contradict official claims and highlight the absence of toilets among marginalised communities

Addressing this requires more than reiterating targets. First, there must be a credible, independent audit of ODF claims, with a focus on community-level disparities. Second, sanitation policy must move beyond construction to usability – ensuring reliable water supply, promoting compact toilet designs for small homes, and guaranteeing maintenance of community facilities. Third, awareness campaigns must be intensified, particularly among marginalised groups, to bridge information gaps around subsidies and schemes. Finally, accountability must be localised, with panchayats and community organisations empowered and held responsible for last-mile delivery. Sanitation cannot be declared complete while exclusion persists. Until the most vulnerable households are reached, ODF will remain a statistic, not a reality.

BIG SQUEEZE

A double oil shock and some inflation pains

Rising oil prices and stagnant wages place the Indian household under stress, exposing gaps in official data

AJIT RANADE

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s bi-monthly Inflation Expectations Survey of households in March 2026 shows the perceived inflation to be 7.2%. This is more than double the official Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based reading of 3.2% for February. The CPI was recently revamped to be more representative of true inflation. The RBI survey also shows households expect prices to rise 8.5% over the next three months and 8.8% over the year. This is not a statistical quirk or popular pessimism. It is lived experience. The gap between official data and ground-level perception of reality has rarely been more politically charged.

Meanwhile, India is caught in a double oil squeeze. The first is fuel. With crude at $115 per barrel in March, driven by the West Asia conflict, transport and power costs, and the prices of virtually all manufactured goods are rising. The RBI itself acknowledges that its baseline assumption of $85 per barrel for the year could easily be breached if hostilities resume. The ceasefire between the US and Iran, announced earlier this month, is fragile. Peace talks have failed. A resumption of conflict would sharply increase oil prices and, therefore, Indian inflation.

The second oil is what Indians use for cooking. India imports nearly 90% of its edible oils: palm from Indonesia and Malaysia, soy from Argentina and Brazil, and sunflower from Russia and Ukraine. The war has rattled global commodities markets and sent vegetable oil prices surging alongside crude. Retail edible oil prices rose by Re 1 to Rs 4 per kg in just one week. India's palm oil imports fell 19% in March to a three-month low as price-wary refiners held back. This will tighten domestic availability in the coming months. Both oils singe the household budget.

The lived experience of inflation in healthcare, medicines, education, transportation, and house rents has been high for several years, as documented in a new book called *Breakpoint*. India's recently revised CPI basket has a structural blind spot. It captures the rents paid by sitting tenants whose leases escalate by a formulaic 5-10% annually, rather than the market rents faced by new entrants. Brokers and tenants across cities routinely report double-digit rent increases even as official housing inflation remains subdued. The index is measuring the wrong price. The official thermometer is not reporting the correct temperature.

All of this is happening against the backdrop of stagnant real wages, especially in rural India. When everything costs more and wages do not keep pace, households cut nutrition, defer medical care, and pull children from private schools. The violent protests for wage hikes we are witnessing in Haryana's Manesar and Noida's industrial clusters are not merely labour disputes. They are inflation's social manifestation.

In Manesar, factory workers boycotted work, clashed with police, and drew the government into a dramatic concession. The government announced a 35% hike in minimum wages for unskilled workers. It is barely enough. The protests are a damning verdict on years of inflation outpacing wage growth.

In Noida, workers in garment and hosiery factories resorted to stone pelting, arson, and vandalism. They, too, are asking for a raise in minimum wages. India has around 400 million internal migrant workers acutely sensitive to food and fuel costs. When a meal doubles in price and LPG becomes scarce, many simply return to their villages. "Once labour leaves, it is very difficult to get them back," is a refrain from the India SME Forum. The threat to India's manufacturing competitiveness – already strained by global supply chain disruptions – is real.

Reality beyond the indices

On the macro front, the rupee fell 10% against the dollar in the last fiscal year. The fall in March was sharp, and the exchange rate crossed 95. The RBI responded with a dramatic crackdown. It virtually banned domestic bank participation in offshore betting on the rupee-dollar rate. This is called the non-deliverable forward (NDF) market, which is technically outside the RBI's regulatory ambit and operates in Singapore, London, or New York. It is an offshore $149 billion-a-day market that offers an opportunity to hedge against a falling rupee. It also signals to onshore people how the rupee is moving. While the sudden crackdown made the rupee bounce up, it is unclear whether this will last if the war continues. As such, the RBI's intervention to prop up the rupee cost India $30.5 billion in precious foreign exchange reserves in March alone.

The RBI has expressed deep displeasure at banks using the offshore-onshore gap to profit from the rupee's weakness. But as any careful observer will note, the offshore NDF market is a symptom, not the disease. The disease is India's structural current account deficit, widened by high oil import bills. This is combined with portfolio outflows of $26 billion over two years and net FDI that has turned zero or negative. These are real economy vulnerabilities that no amount of derivative-market policing can cure.

This week, as the IMF and World Bank hold their spring meetings, global growth forecasts are being revised downward. The RBI has held the repo rate at 5.25% and projects inflation to average 4.6% in 2026-27. These are carefully calibrated projections. But they will be hard to defend if oil prices remain elevated, if the West Asia ceasefire breaks down, and if the monsoon disappoints – none of which can be dismissed as unlikely.

The Indian household does not read CPI press releases. It reads the price on the cooking oil tin, the gas cylinder bill, the school fee notice, and the medical invoice. And it is telling the RBI survey that prices are rising at more than twice the official rate. That is the voice that matters – and it is saying, clearly and urgently, that the singeing is far from over.

(The writer is an economist; Syndicate: The Billion Press)

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

How cheese colonised the *chapati*

Pizza never comes alone. It arrives with its rowdy cousins

RITU KAMRA KUMAR

Once upon a time, in a modest kitchen fragrant with cumin and coriander, I ruled. My weapon? The rolling pin. My battleground? *Chapati*s versus hungry children. My victory? Clean plates and sleepy smiles. And then, like a soft-cheesy storm, it entered our lives—the round, the glorious, the unstoppable: pizza.

Who can resist that golden-crusted circle of sin dripping with cheese and saucy secrets? I certainly couldn't. But this isn't just about temptation—it is a tale of transformation. From the heart of a mother now bewildered in her once-mighty kitchen, watching her kids whisper sweet nothings to a box from "PizzaCrafto" or "Cheese4U."

I once heard, "Ma, what's for dinner?" Now it is, "Ma, OTP please, my pizza's almost here." When it arrives, the box is opened with more reverence than the family photo album. My *parathas* sulk quietly in the corner, shunned like Doordarshan in the Netflix age. Oh, Pizza! You round, rebellious rogue! You spin in ovens and hearts alike. From Naples to Noida your fame has flown, and my *kadhi-chawal* now feels alone.

Pizza brings joy—and also guilt, garnished generously. For every bite of mozzarella, there's a gym membership silently judging from the wallet. Pizza is that charismatic bad boy you shouldn't fall for—but do, repeatedly, with extra cheese. My son once reasoned, "Ma, pizza has veggies too. It's practically a salad." So now, 'healthy' is just a thin crust away from hypocrisy. Round pizzas bring round bellies, leading to our rounds of parks, dieting apps, and regret.

In my childhood, weekends meant *pakoras* and spiced lemonade. Birthdays came with *biryani* and coconut *laddoos*. Today, birthdays are incomplete without pepperoni parades and jalapeño joy. My niece even demanded a "pizza-themed" birthday. Yet I confess I too have danced with desire. In the dark corners of my kitchen, while everyone sleeps, I've warmed a leftover slice in the microwave and eaten it like stolen treasure. Pizza doesn't just conquer plates—it colonises conscience.

Still, I can't deny its moments: the joy on my children's faces as they debate toppings, the midnight giggles after a shared slice, and the ease it brings when chopping onions feels like a Himalayan task. But pizza never comes alone. It arrives with its rowdy cousins—burgers bloated with bravado; garlic bread plotting waistline warfare; and that sly villain: molten chocolate fudge. Together they march in like an edible *Avengers* team—delicious, dangerous, and determined to dethrone *daal-chawal*.

If Shakespeare were alive today, he'd sigh, "*Et tu*, Pizza?" before reaching for a thin-crust Margherita. So here's my final slice of sanity:

Eat the pizza—but don't forget the pickle jar, the *pulao* that hums of home, and the *ghee*-kissed *rotis* that smell like childhood. Let pizza stay the pop star of indulgence, not the staple of every hungry hour. While cheese may melt hearts, tradition sticks to your ribs—and your roots. Now excuse me while I sneak spinach into a pizza and call it Detox Delight before my son notices it is not extra cheese. Wish me strength—and stealth.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Judges should be subjected to rigorous probes

I refer to 'Cash scandal: No closure in resignation' (Apr 15). The judiciary's moral authority comes from perceived integrity. That perception is eroding. From lower courts to higher benches, whispers of corruption have turned into open public discourse, yet constitutional immunity keeps judges insulated from processes that bind every other public servant. When officers or elected officials face allegations, suspension, investigation, and prosecution follow as routine. For judges, resignation often precedes impeachment, halting inquiries and denying the public answers. Such exits look less like accountability and more like evasion. Immunity was designed to guard judicial independence from political pressure, not to shield misconduct from legal consequence. Until judges face the same rigorous probes, swift trials, and strict punishments as any citizen, the notion that the judiciary is sacred will remain a fading myth.
N Sadhasiva Reddy, Bengaluru

Anti-democratic 'engine'

The idea of a double-engine government, promoted by the BJP, runs contrary to the spirit of democracy by advocating a monopoly of one party—no need for an opponent and no protests against their policies and decisions. They want to be autocratic, and that is how the double engine concept evolved. The need for an extra engine arises when the existing engine is weak, and it functions as a supplement. But insisting that you should purchase only my brand so that you will get the benefits is not a business ethic. Likewise in politics. The party at the Centre cannot blackmail the electorate. It is not only against the principle of democracy but also amounts to coercion.
S Sundara Pandian, Bengaluru

Promote conservation

Apropos 'IMD predicts below-normal SW monsoon' (Apr 14), with water levels dropping in the majority of reservoirs, groundwater depleting fast, temperatures soaring and two more months of summer, judicious use of water by farmers combined with opting for drip and micro-sprinkler irrigation is inevitable. The government must incentivise water conservation by conducting awareness campaigns at village levels for the simple reason that nature is unpredictable.
Rajiv Magal, Ballupete

Our readers are welcome to email letters to: **letters@deccanherald.co.in** (only letters emailed – not handwritten – will be accepted). All letters must carry the sender's postal address and phone number.

SPEAK OUT

I want to thank the PM, because he actually understood the pain of the women. Many people before him were assuring, but the PM made it (Women's Reservation Bill) a reality...

Vasundhara Raje, former Rajasthan CM and BJP leader

In politics, progress is collective—but credit is often carefully personalised.

Anonymous

TO BE PRECISE

IN PERSPECTIVE

Hungary has lessons for democracies

Viktor Orbán's electoral defeat shows that voters eventually prioritise performance over narrative politics

K S TOMAR

The electoral defeat of Viktor Orbán in Hungary, after 16 uninterrupted years in power, marks a defining moment, not just for Europe but for democracies across the world. His loss to Péter Magyar signals a deeper shift: voters, even in polarised environments, can move beyond entrenched narratives when governance deficits begin to outweigh ideological mobilisation. Hungary's outcome is thus a reminder that political dominance built on messaging alone has limits.

Orbán's model rested on nationalism, Euroscepticism, and cultural polarisation. For years, it delivered electoral success, reinforced by institutional control and media dominance. Political discourse was shaped around identity issues rather than governance outcomes. Over time, however, economic pressures, strain on public services, and allegations of corruption created a growing disconnect between narrative and reality.

Magyar's campaign altered this equation by refusing to engage on Orbán's chosen terrain. Instead of countering nationalism with counter-nationalism, he shifted the debate towards governance, accountability, and economic repair. This repositioning of the narrative proved decisive, showing that the success of opposition parties in polarised systems depends less on ideological confrontation and more on reframing voter priorities.

For India, Hungary's experience carries clear resonance. Indian politics has witnessed phases where mobilisation is driven by identity, symbolism, and narrative construction. These tools are part of democratic contestation, but Hungary illustrates the risks of overdependence when they overshadow the delivery of governance.

The central lesson is about democratic sustainability. Voters may endorse strong narratives for extended periods, but their tolerance is not indefinite. Economic stress, unemployment, inflation, and institutional performance eventually shape electoral behaviour. When these pressures accumulate, even well-entrenched systems can face disruption.

Equally significant is the lesson for opposition politics in India. Fragmentation and reactive positioning have often limited the emergence of a credible political alternative in the country. Hungary suggests that coherence and a governance-focused agenda can shift electoral dynamics, even against a dominant incumbent. Magyar's success lies in redefining political engagement.

The outcome in Hungary also has wider implications for leaders who rely heavily on electoral messaging aimed at winning polls rather than sustaining governance outcomes. The political style associated with United States President Donald Trump – marked by polarisation and narrative dominance – finds echoes across regions, with Orbán often seen as a European counterpart.

His defeat highlights a key limitation: strategies that are built on division and identity mobilisation may deliver victories, but they do not ensure durable governance legitimacy. Over time, administrative performance, economic management, and institutional credibility reassert themselves.

For emerging democracies, this presents a dilemma. Electoral incentives often favour short-term mobilisation over long-term reform. Hungary shows the risks of this imbalance. When governance deficits deepen, the political cost can be sudden.

A reset with implications

Beyond India, the Hungarian shift is relevant for systems where incumbents have consolidated power through their control of narratives. Elections in such contexts often become referendums on identity rather than performance. Hungary suggests this balance can change when economic and administrative pressures intensify.

The outcome should not be overstated as universal. Political cultures differ widely. What is evident, however, is that no system is immune to correction. Even where institutions appear tilted, voter sentiment can recalibrate outcomes once dissatisfaction crosses a threshold.

Within Europe, Orbán's defeat alters the dynamics of the European Union. Hungary had long acted as a disruptive voice, particularly on the conflict in Ukraine and the relations with Russia. A government led by Magyar is expected to recalibrate this stance, potentially strengthening cohesion.

This carries geopolitical implications. Orbán's alignment with Vladimir Putin and his obstruction of EU initiatives had complicated coordination. A more cooperative Hungary could ease tensions, though rebuilding trust will take time.

While Orbán's defeat is significant, it marks the start of a new phase. Magyar's government must translate electoral success into strong governance outcomes. Economic repair, institutional restoration, and diplomatic recalibration will require stability.

Electoral victories built on governance promises must be followed by delivery, or the cycle of discontent will repeat.

The political shift in Hungary reaffirms the limits of strategies that prioritise winning elections over governing effectively. For India and other democracies, the message is clear: narratives can shape outcomes, but they cannot indefinitely substitute for governance. When voters recalibrate, the shift can be decisive. Orbán's fall is thus not merely a national event – it is an important reminder that in democratic politics, performance ultimately catches up with power.

(The writer is a strategic affairs columnist and senior political analyst based in Shimla)

Gulf uncertainty tests Kerala, but new opportunities may emerge

DATELINE Thiruvananthapuram

ARJUN RAGHUNATH

A UAE-settled, middle-aged couple, hailing from a south Kerala district, visited home last month along with their children. Despite the deepening West Asia crisis, they have no plans to stay back.

"It's not just about meeting daily expenses but also huge liabilities from buying land in Kerala. There is no question of staying back here," they said.

Joyce, a cab driver based at Tiruvalla in central Kerala, was quite relieved when this *DH* reporter recently hired his cab for Assembly election coverage. "It is after one week that I am getting a trip. Usually, we are busy with NRIs during this season because of Easter and Vishu," he said.

Their accounts reflect Kerala's high-level economic dependency on Gulf remittances.

Reports of layoffs, compulsory leaves and hiring freezes across Gulf countries have triggered much anxiety among families directly dependent on NRI incomes. The ripple effects are already visible in a host of sectors, such as tourism, travel, and exports. Even homes and hotels are facing a cooking gas shortage.

Experts anticipate a mass return of migrants in the coming months, which could lead to a nearly 20% drop in remittances. They also anticipate a counter-current: global firms in the Gulf exploring relocation to safer destinations in India and the possibility of a post-war hiring boom.

Of Kerala's 21.5 lakh overseas migrants, 80.5% are in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, with the UAE topping the list with 38.6%. With this concentration, Kerala has more reasons to worry over the prolonged tension.

According to forums and government agencies working for NRI welfare, many NRIs working in sectors such as hospitality, event management, real estate and transport in the UAE are facing job loss. They are not ruling out chances of a mass exodus in the coming months. Flight disruptions and high fares are forcing many who have already lost jobs to stay back for now.

"The situation is quite concerning. Job losses have already been reported in sectors like hospitality, banking and event management, where scores of Malayalis are working. The construction sector is also likely to be affected if the crisis prolongs. The real impact will be clear only after flight operations normalise," said Ajith Kolassery, chief executive officer of NORKA-Roots, a Kerala government agency working for the welfare of NRIs.

Mansoor Palloor, the Middle East convener of the Indian Overseas Congress, said jobs in sectors such as construction, transport and retail could be hit if the crisis continues. Companies are holding back fresh projects, which makes the situations quite concerning.

A senior official at the Thiruvananthapuram International Airport said that many who returned from GCC countries were found to be asked by companies to go on compulsory long leaves, and many were anxious about job loss.

Meanwhile, experts also point out that even as Kerala witnessed a mass exodus during the Kuwait war as well as Covid-19, emigration continued to increase afterwards.

"In the post-war scenario, there could be a large requirement of Malayalis for rebuilding activities in the Gulf countries. Hence, there could be a boom in migration. But it all depends on how long the war will prolong," said S Irudaya Rajan, founder-chair of the Thiruvananthapuram-based International Institute of Migration and Development (IIMAD).

Rajan, who did extensive studies on migrations from Kerala, anticipates at least a 20% drop in remittance as an immediate effect. The long-term effects would be more severe if the war prolongs itself, he added.

At present, non-resident deposits in banks in Kerala are over Rs 3 trillion.

According to various studies, Kerala holds a steady 21% share of India's NRI deposits. The NRI remittances also play a significant role in strengthening Kerala's economy; they constituted 1.7 times the revenue receipt of the state.

The tourism sector is already feeling the heat. April to June is typically when visitors from GCC countries, including the Arabs, arrive in large numbers, but this year has seen a sharp decline. The majority of tourists to Kerala arrived from the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

"Cancellations by tourists from GCC countries are massive. Arab tourists usually travel with families and spend lavishly. They are considered high-end tourists as they spend time and money at hill stations, Ayurvedic resorts and houseboats. The impact caused by the prolonging West Asia crisis is having its cascading effect on many such sectors," said Jose Pradeep, president of Kerala Travel Mart, a key forum of stakeholders of the state tourism sector.

The export of perishables to Gulf countries was the first to be hit by the West Asian crisis, as the shipments depend heavily on scheduled flights. On an average, around 140 to 150 tonnes of fruits and vegetables were being exported daily to Gulf countries through the four airports in Kerala. During festival seasons like Vishu, Easter and Ramadan, the volumes typically went up. But flight disruptions have hit the exports badly.

"We were willing to pay a higher rate of up to Rs 200 per kg in chartered flights, which is more than double the normal fare. But airlines demanded up to Rs 600," said Abraham Thomas, president of the Agricultural Products and Processed Food Exporters' Association (APEXA).

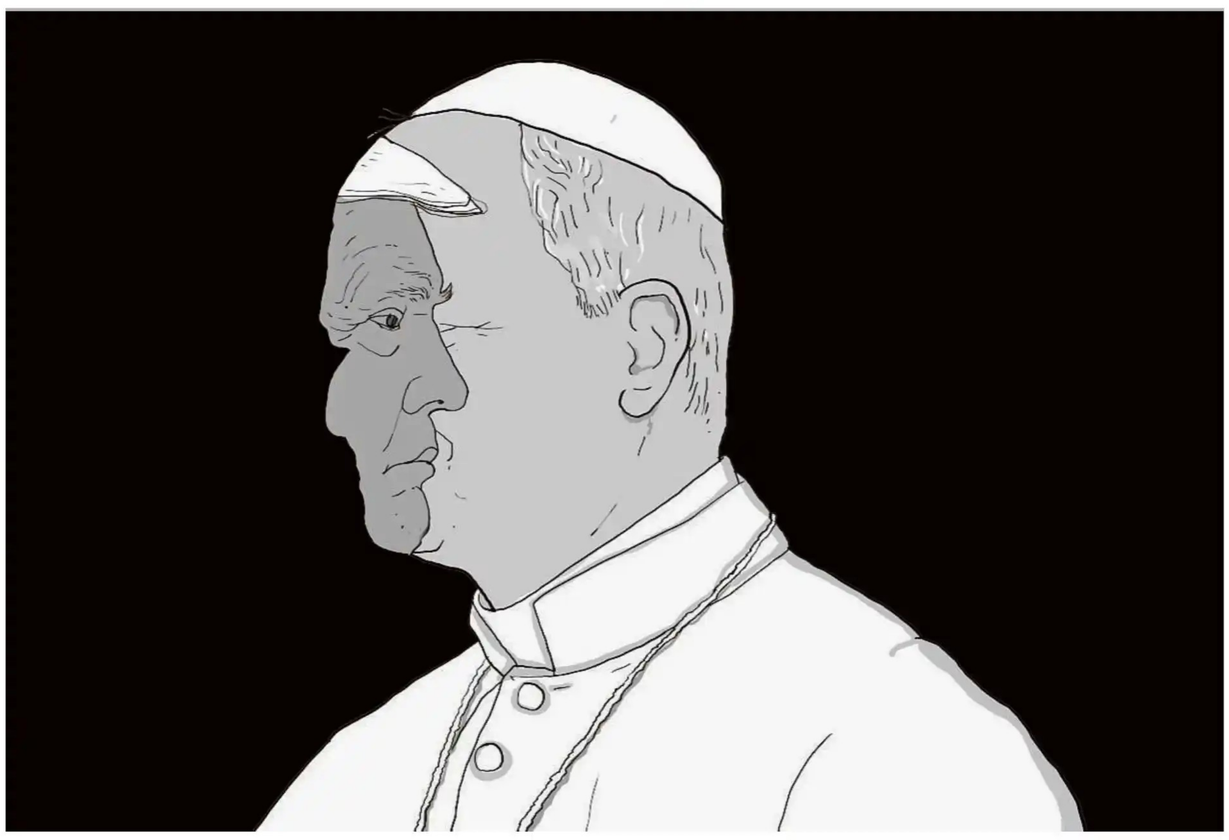
Even amid this uncertainty, industry leaders in Kerala see fresh opportunities.

"While a mass return is expected, the state could also anticipate fresh opportunities, as many international firms, with key centres in Dubai, may now look for other safer destinations. So, Kerala as well as other Indian states could tap the opportunity. This could also open up job opportunities and facilitate reverse migration," said S N Raghuchandran Nair, president of the Trivandrum Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

DHNS

Unlike his predecessor, Pope Leo XIV enjoys growing support from a broad swath of conservative Catholics

ELIZABETH DIAS AND MOTOKO RICH



DH ILLUSTRATION: DEEPAK HARICHANDAN

In Leo, Trump faces a different kind of papal opponent

Donald Trump ascended to office 10 years ago while publicly jousting with Pope Francis, who was routinely making headlines for the progressive Catholicism he elevated, pushing the Roman Catholic Church to focus on climate change and the rights of immigrants. The pope suggested that Trump was "not Christian"; Trump fired back that Francis was "disgraceful."

Trump capitalised on growing discontent among conservative Christians and won the White House. The chasm only further widened between the Vatican and conservative American Catholics, who often saw in Trump a champion.

Pope Leo XIV, who was elected less than a year ago, is not Francis. For Trump, who is now in his second term, he presents a new foil at the Vatican with a markedly different standing among Catholics. As the first American in the seat of St Peter, he has a native fluency in American politics and culture, and his leadership is supported across broad swaths of the American church.

This new dynamic was at play in a pointed exchange Sunday night and Monday, when Trump unleashed a tirade on social media against Leo, who then stood his ground.

"I'm not sure this is ultimately going to be a positive fight for the president to wage," said Matt Salisbury, whose firm provides strategic communications for many conservative Catholic clients.

He added that many of his Catholic friends in the Washington area who, like him, voted for Trump, including some who work in the administration, were "unanimously critical" of the president's outburst.

Unlike his predecessor, Leo has growing support from conservative Catholics in pews across the United States. As the anniversary of his election approaches next month, he has so significantly rebuilt the Vatican's relationship with the American Catholic right that many in Trump's own camp rushed to the pope's defence on Monday.

Interviews with conservatives attending Mass at Catholic parishes across the country revealed significant displeasure with the president for his harsh criticism of the pope, a dynamic hard to imagine not long ago.

Outside midday Mass at the Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan del Valle National Shrine in San Juan, Texas, not far from the border with Mexico, Rudy Gutiérrez, 68, said he had voted for Trump in each of the past three presidential elections. But the attack on the pope for speaking out against war in Iran amid the threat of escalating violence went too far, he said.

"As a Catholic, I take offense to that, and I am Republican," Gutiérrez said.

At first, many conservative Catholics were wary of Leo's election, worrying he might be a Francis protégé. But he quickly made it clear that he was gently returning the church to a more traditional path. He has chosen to live in the pope's quarters of the Apostolic Palace and to renew an old practice of Pope John Paul II by carrying the cross through the Colosseum on Good Friday. He has focused on issues like artificial intelligence, a largely nonpartisan issue in the church, and has not antagonised conservatives over the Latin Mass.

When Pope Francis toured the United States in 2015, it was his first time in the country. Pope Leo, born Robert Prevost in Chicago, was elected in May after spending most of his career abroad in South America and then Rome.

"Where you're from matters," said Kathleen Sprows Cummings, a history professor who specialises in Catholicism at the University of Notre Dame. "He's got friends, he's got siblings in the United States. He understands American politics. He knows Republicans and Democrats.

"That doesn't mean that's why he was elected or he's even approaching this as an American," she said. "But he understands it, and he would have been paying attention to Donald Trump in a way that Pope Francis wouldn't have."

Leo's modest, calm style also shapes his approach to how he manages volatile American politics. Many conservative Catholics disliked Francis' outspoken advocacy for the poor and migrants, which they viewed as coming at the expense of other priorities. Although Leo also speaks out for the poor and migrants, he is less dramatic in his speeches.

"He's a very disciplined, reserved person, and that makes his criticism that much harder to dismiss," said David Gibson, director of the Centre on Religion and Culture at Fordham University. "This isn't, 'There goes Pope Francis again.' You can't say that about Leo. This is a person who thinks, who deliberates and says what he means."

Leo is showing that Catholic teaching does not fit neatly into American political boxes, said Ashley McGuire, a senior fellow at the Catholic Association, a small nonprofit that promotes conservative causes.

"This continues to vex the president, who is treating him like a political adversary," she said. "If anything, however, that he is American and still defying American political agendas is demonstrating all the more that the papacy is a spiritual, not a political, office."

Leo has an 84% favourability rating among American Catholics, with overwhelmingly high support regardless of political party, according to a Pew Research Centre survey from last year. Francis' favourability rating was just as high the first year of his papacy, but by the time of his death it had dropped to 78%.

At Mass at St Lawrence Catholic Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, on Monday, Fernanda Moreira said she voted for Trump in 2016 and again in 2024, but now had strong concerns.

"It's scary," Moreira said. "I was for him very much, but I think he's going in the wrong direction. It's sad because he's done so much that is good."

Theresa Thien said she voted for Trump in 2016 because she was tired of career politicians, but after his first four years he lost her support. Now Thien believes that the president is in a "downward spiral."

"What kind of leader preaches Christ and Christian behaviour and threatens to annihilate a population?" asked Thien, a lifelong Catholic, referring to Trump's recent comments about Iran. "Where people say 'He's the best' or 'He's appointed by God,' I don't know—I have a hard time with that. He threatened the pope."

At least one conservative Catholic—perhaps the most prominent one — did not seem to object to the president's outburst.

Leo should "stick to matters of, you know, what's going on in the Catholic Church," Vice President J D Vance, who converted to Catholicism in 2019, said Monday night on *Fox News*.

The first US-born pontiff has been increasingly outspoken on the issues of war and peace in recent weeks during the US-Israeli war in Iran. His Easter message came amid new Israeli airstrikes in Lebanon and President Trump's threatening to rain down "hell" on Iran.

Pope Leo XIV used his first Easter address as pontiff to renew pleas for peace and dialogue, and to condemn violence. "On this day of celebration, let us abandon every desire for conflict, domination and power, and implore the Lord to grant his peace to a world ravaged by wars and marked by a hatred and indifference that make us feel powerless in the face of evil," Leo said on Easter to tens of thousands of faithful gathered in St Peter's Square.

The New York Times

The next step for startup India

VIKRANT SINGH AND SUMIT JAIN

The India AI Summit, 2026, in its New Delhi declaration, places the democratisation of AI resources at the centre of public policy. Two emerging essentials underpin this goal: robust digital infrastructure and affordable connectivity. In this global technology ecosystem, startups could play a major role in building affordable and robust infrastructure locally to enhance the last-mile access to AI. The participation of over 500 tech startups, including 12 indigenous firms in the AI summit, gives credence to this idea.

India, reportedly the world's third-largest startup hub with nearly two lakh government-recognised entities, has built impressive scale. Yet, primary interactions with founders reveal various challenges that require a more decisive government role.

Launched in 2016, the Startup India mission aims to promote innovation and entrepreneurship through three pillars: simplification and handholding support, funding and incentives, and industry-academia partnerships. These seek to ease compliance, reduce regulatory burdens, expand access to funding, and strengthen incubation and knowledge exchange.

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) anchors implementation. India's startup ecosystem is valued at around $350 billion and has produced more than 100 unicorns. However, there are deeper fragilities.

In 2024 alone around 5,000 recognised startups shut down, largely due to funding constraints and intense competition. The problem appears structural: nearly 90% of startups remain at the ideation or early traction stage, while only 4.5% have accessed funding under Startup India schemes. According to a SIDBI report, the Fund of Funds for Startups (FFS) had disbursed just Rs 2,492.24 crore by March 2022 against a sanctioned Rs 7,225.45 crore, reflecting delays and other complexities. As a result, founders often rely on personal savings or informal borrowings or shut shop.

Another gap is in the regulatory framework. Higher corporate tax rates, cumbersome application processes, company registration compliances, bankruptcy laws, etc., along with conditions like the disqualification of startups from availing government benefits once the revenues cross the Rs 1 billion mark, hamper their success rates. Different thresholds and exemptions highlighted in the Startup India Action Plan—such as a three-year tax exemption and labour inspections waivers—are often inadequate for early-stage startups. Such constraints leave some founders with little choice but to relocate abroad.

Other challenges include a lack of planning, difficulty in finding the right human resources, poor marketing and customer retention strategies, insufficient risk management practices and tougher market competition.

Startups also face asymmetrical competition: besides peer competition, they must contend with established firms that can use predatory pricing or restrictive practices in the absence of robust regulatory checks. Even successful startups are vulnerable to 'killer acquisitions'. The current policy framework is ill-equipped to address these concerns, necessitating effective regulatory intervention.

The current ecosystem must ensure a level playing field for all startups, irrespective of their size, life-cycle stage, turnovers or sectors. This calls for selective government intervention to protect startups from the bigger sharks.

A responsible and vibrant startup ecosystem of any country expects proactive action from its government, more specifically in relation to maintaining a level playing field between smaller firms and the bigger corporations. The antitrust watchdog of the country, the Competition Commission of India (CCI), can play a decisive role in this regard to protect the nascent domestic startups from bigger entities, foreign giants and public sector enterprises.

As the Startup India programme completes a decade, it is time to reassess its outcomes and redefine the role of the government with the active involvement of its agencies and institutions in ensuring a 'market for all'. Care should also be taken that such government interventions remain surgical and do not distort the overall market dynamics. This would be in line with the larger aspirations of the country, with a great demographic dividend.

(The writers are founding directors at the Centre for Competition Law and Economics)

OUR PAGES OF HISTORY

50 YEARS AGO: APRIL 1976

India names envoy to China, thaw in ties after 14 years

New Delhi, April 15
India has appointed Mr. K. R. Narayanan, Secretary in the External Affairs Ministry, as her Ambassador to the People's Republic of China. The appointment of an Ambassador to China, after a lapse of 14 years, was announced by External Affairs Minister Y. B. Chavan in the Lok Sabha today. China has conveyed its agreement to his appointment. Mr. G. Parthasarathy, the last Indian Ambassador to serve in Peking, was recalled early in 1962 after a series of border clashes with China, which culminated in a war in October that year.

25 YEARS AGO: APRIL 2001

Shivappa joins Cong

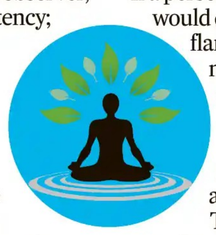
Bangalore, April 15
Sakleshpur MLA and expelled BJP leader B B Shivappa today joined the ruling Congress as an "associate member" in the presence of Chief Minister S M Krishna and newly appointed KPCC President Allam Veerabhadrappa. While Mr Shivappa joined the party without any fanfare at the residence of Chief Minister S M Krishna, a public function will be organised in his home district Hassan, where he would be inducted into the party along with his supporters. He has been taken as an associate member according to constitutional norms.

OASIS | ANANTHAPADMANABHAN

The strength of being still

In an era that celebrates singular labels and loud self-promotion, the truest strength lies in the refusal to be just one thing. Modern life often pressures individuals to define themselves within narrow boundaries: one must be either the extrovert or the introvert; the daring adventurer or the homebody.

Yet, the most resilient among us embody a paradox—carrying a daring spirit within a calm exterior. These "quiet storms" understand that the intense heat of industry is only sustainable when tempered by the cool sanctuary of private reflection. This sophisticated balance is written into the rhythm of a truly productive life.



Mornings may be spent pursuing ambitious goals with relentless focus, only to have the day end in a retreat into silence as the sun sets. To an observer, this might look like inconsistency; in reality, it is a functional harmony. A daring spirit provides the "why" for our efforts—the spark that identifies the mountain to climb.

Conversely, a calm nature provides the "how," offering the mental clarity needed to navigate the ascent without being deafened by the world's noise. Guarding private time is not an act of withdrawal; it is self-preservation in a world of exhausting digital performance.

This "inner sanctuary" is the soil where the next great effort takes root. If a person were always "on," they would eventually burn out like a flame with too much oxygen and no fuel. By valuing solitude, we ensure that when it is time to step back into the world, we do so from a place of genuine fullness rather than performative exhaustion.

The greatest challenge remains the misguided advice of those who find complexity uncomfortable. When society suggests "fixing" a quiet nature or "toning down" an ambition to fit a predictable mould, one must hold their ground. We are not problems to be solved; we are unique, intricate compositions. Integrity means staying true to this multifaceted nature, even when the world lacks a convenient label for it. History confirms this duality. Mahatma Gandhi challenged an empire through revolutionary daring, yet drew strength from a weekly day of silence. J R D Tata built a global empire while maintaining a modest personality that shunned the limelight.

Simply put, the power of a quiet storm lies in its depth, not its noise. By honouring both the spark of the day and the silence of the night, it is possible to achieve a success that is both impactful and sustainable.

Sabotage row deepens: Cong suspends MLC

Abdul Jabbar, From Page 1

It is widely believed that Jabbar, Ahmed and Zameer were miffed that the Davangere South bypoll ticket was not given to Muslims whose votes are decisive in that constituency. The Congress fielded late MLA Shamanur Shivashankarappa's grandson, Samarth.

Hitting back, Jabbar said his suspension made it clear that there was "differential treatment" within the party. He asked why there was no action against Shamanur Shivashankarappa when he openly canvassed for BJP veteran BS Yediyurappa's son BY Raghavendra during the 2024 Lok Sabha election.

"I should've been asked before being suspended. I should've been told the basis on which I was being suspended. I could've responded," Jabbar said.

Jabbar said that the party's Minority Legislators Forum wanted a Muslim to get the Davangere South ticket. "If not a Muslim, we said some other unrepresented community, even Kurubas, should get the ticket," he said. "Our point was that one household (Shamanur family) shouldn't get so much representation," he said.

Shamanur's son SS Mallikarjun, is an MLA and a minister, while his wife Prabha, is the Davangere MP.

Former minister KN Rajanna, the CM's loyalist who was sacked from the Cabinet last year, wondered why there was no action against Shivakumar for rubbing shoulders with 'Sadhguru' Jaggi Vasudev. "Sadhguru said he didn't know who Rahul Gandhi was. Won't sharing the stage with him amount to violating discipline?

There's a proverb that the king faces no punishment. That's how things are in the party right now," Rajanna said.

Panchayat polls: Guv clears bill replacing EVMs with paper ballots

Bill had witnessed heated debates in the session

BENGALURU, DHNS

Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot has cleared the Karnataka Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Bill, 2026, that replaces electronic voting machines (EVMs) with paper ballots in panchayat elections.

Following the assent from the governor on April 14, the government has published amendments in the gazette on Wednesday. Earlier this week, when the governor cleared 10 other bills, he had held Wback approval of the Bill.

It seeks to replace EVMs with ballot papers for elections to gram panchayats, taluk panchayats and zilla panchayats. It aims to ensure free, fair and transparent elections, safeguard the secrecy of voting and address concerns raised over the reliability of EVMs.

The Bill had witnessed a day-long debate in the Legislative Assembly and Council, with members of the Opposition BJP and JD(S) walking out after the discussion on the bill, expressing disagreement with the proposed amendments.

Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka had torn a copy of the Bill on the floor of the House, terming it 'retrograde', before the walkout.

Other Bills cleared by governor

- Karnataka Freedom of Choice in Marriage and Prevention and Prohibition of Crimes in the Name of Honour and Tradition Bill, 2026 ("Eva Nammava Bill")
- Jnana Bhandar Manuscripts and Digitisation Bill, 2026: To establish Karnataka Manuscripts Authority for the survey, conservation and digitisation of ancient manuscripts.
- Motor Vehicles Taxation (Amendment) Bill, 2026: Reduces taxes for contract buses and sleeper coaches.
- Appropriation (No 2) Bill, 2026: Pertains to budgetary allocations for 2026-27.
- Appropriation Bill, 2026: Pertains to budgetary allocations for 2026-27.
- Tax on Profession, Trades, Callings and Employments (Amendment) Bill, 2026: Amends the professional tax structure.
- Municipalities and Certain other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026: Amends the Municipalities Act, 1964 and Municipal Corporations Act, 1976.
- Police (Amendment) Bill, 2026: Addresses the transfers of police officers.
- Lokayukta (Amendment) Bill, 2026: Aligns allowances and service conditions of Lokayukta with Supreme Court judges.
- Government Educational Institutions Lands (Protection and Regularisation) Bill, 2026: Pertains to management of lands of educational institutions.

Samrat takes oath as Bihar's 1st BJP CM with 2 JD(U) deputies

Samrat, From Flap

Both Vijay Choudhaary and Bijendra Yadav are the trusted associates of Nitish. Incidentally, Nitish's son Nishant Kumar, who was tipped to be the new Deputy CM, reportedly refused to join the new Cabinet saying he would like to work for the party and strengthen it at the grassroots level.

Samrat on Wednesday created several records of sorts. He became the first chief minister from the BJP in Bihar, the only state in the Hindi heartland where the saffron camp had failed to have its own CM. Secondly, he equalled the feat of Bharat Ratna Karpoori Thakur, who became CM after being elevated from the Deputy CM's post in 1970. Third, Samrat became the second chief minister from the Koeri community (the second most influential OBCs after Yadavs). Earlier, Satish Prasad Singh, also a Koeri, had become Bihar CM in 1968 but only for five days.

The new Cabinet will be expanded later as there are still 33 vacancies for the ministerial berth. According to the constitutional mandate, Bihar can have 36 ministers, including the CM, in the 243-member Assembly.

ROAD TO SUCCESS

- **1999:** Samrat becomes minister for the first time in Rabri Devi-headed RJD Govt.
- **2010:** Becomes Chief Whip of the RJD.
- **2014:** Joins JD (U). Eventually becomes minister in Jitan Ram Manjhi Govt.
- **2017:** Joins BJP; becomes Bihar BJP president in 2018.
- **2021:** Becomes Panchayati Raj Minister in Nitish Govt
- **2024:** When Nitish dumped RJD and rejoined NDA in January 2024, Samrat becomes Deputy Chief Minister as well as Finance Minister.
- **2025:** Samrat becomes Nitish's deputy again, but gets Home portfolio, thereby becoming the second most powerful politician in the State.
- **2026:** On April 15, becomes BJP's first Chief Minister in Bihar.

Delimitation: Govt, Oppn face-off likely

Delimitation, From Page 1

It will also test the unity of the Opposition at a time when some of them are fighting against each other in the ongoing Assembly elections.

Soon after the Bill was circulated on Monday, concerns were raised about linking the exercise of redrawing of constituencies to population.

The Opposition claimed that southern states, which did well in controlling population, as well as states like Punjab, Haryana and the northeast may suffer on representation compared to states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, which could gain more seats and in proportion.

As criticism rose over the proposal to increase 50% seats for all states, which was suggested to some parties by the government, not finding a mention in the Bill, official sources said a minister as senior as Home Minister Amit Shah is likely to clarify it in the Lok Sabha that there will be a rise in seats by half for everyone and there will be no injustice to any state.

However, the Opposition was unimpressed and a meeting called by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and attended by nearly 20 parties unanimously decided to vote against the Bill while making it clear that they were not against early implementation of 33% women's quota but were opposed to linking it to delimitation based on the 2011 Census.

Kharge told reporters that it was a "politically motivated" Bill and they have "reservations" on the way it is being brought, while insisting that all of them were in favour of the Women's quota Bill. Congress General Secretary (Organisation) KC Venugopal said, "We will certainly vote against the Bill."

"We are insisting that an earlier amendment (on women's quota in 2023) that was passed be implemented. They (the BJP government) are playing tricks with delimitation. Therefore, all parties have taken a united decision to oppose this Bill," Kharge said.

After the meeting, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi wrote on 'X': "What the government is proposing now has nothing to do with women's reservation. This amendment is an attempted power grab using delimitation and gerrymandering." He said southern, north-western and northern states as well as smaller ones will face "huge loss".

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav said they are in favor of women's reservation but against the BJP's "cunning ploy, which is being carried out under a conspiracy".

He said on 'X' that the BJP and their allies are tight-lipped about women of the country's largest population segment, the 'backward classes'. "The haste they are showing in the name of this amendment is actually driven by the BJP's intent to avoid a census, because if a census happens, they will have to provide caste-wise data too, and caste-wise reservations as well."

To declare beliefs of millions...

SC, From Page 1

Justice Sundresh said that the Hindu Succession Act could be an example of social reform.

The CJI said that the Constitution preserves social welfare and reform. Justice Nagarathna observed, "In the name of social welfare and reform, you cannot hollow out the religion." Singhvi agreed with Justice Nagarathna's observation.

Singhvi also addressed the issue raised in the reference, whether the court can entertain a PIL questioning a religious practice when the petitioner does not belong to that religion. He contended that courts should adopt a very high threshold for entertaining such PILs.

Singhvi said PILs by third parties cannot suddenly question the traditions followed for centuries in temples like Sabarimala and Guruvayoor.

Singhvi said religion is the faith of millions, and a third party is enabled by direct access to Article 32 of the Constitution to change it. He asked why, in 70-80 years, it had never happened. He said the court cannot decide the validity of a religious practice in a PIL without hearing the believers.

Cong MLA Vinay Kulkarni...

Vinay Kulkarni, From Page 1

The court also convicted Vikram Bellary, Kirthi Kumar Basavaraj Kurahatti, Sandeep Saudatti, Vinayaka Katagi, Mahabaleshwar Hongal alias Muduka, Santhosh Saudatti, Dinesh M, Ashwath, Sunil, Nazeer Ahmed, Shahanawaz, Nuthan, Harshith, Indi and Vikas Kalburgi for murder and criminal conspiracy. However, it acquitted Vasudeva Rama Nilekani and Somashekar Basappa Nyamagouda, giving them the benefit of the doubt.

The court granted the prosecution liberty to seek a sanction to prosecute Biradar, who later turned hostile during the trial. It also directed the Registrar of the City Civil Court to register a perjury case under CrPC Section 340 against witnesses, including police officers, for giving false and misleading statements before the court during the trial.

The witnesses include police officers Shivananda Chalavadi, Babu Katagi, Shankaragouda Basanagouda Patil, as well as independent witnesses Dr Dattatreya Gudaganti, Anand Irappa Uddannavar, Vinayaka Binjiyavar, Mohan Echarappa Mulmuttal, Vivekananda Dalawai, Natraj Sarj Desai and Vijay Kulkarni.

The sensational case saw many twists. Goudar's family alleged he had received death threats before the murder. Although local police initially arrested six suspects, the case was handed over to the CBI in 2019 following a request from Goudar's family. The agency arrested Kulkarni a year later.

In August 2021, the Supreme Court granted Kulkarni bail but cancelled it on June 6, 2025. In January 2026, the High Court of Karnataka rejected his fresh bail petition, observing that it would be against judicial propriety for any other court to reconsider the matter after the Supreme Court itself cancelled bail.

Hema KS and Shivananda Perla, Senior Public Prosecutors, conducted the trail representing the CBI in the case.

Trump hints at end of war; Iran ups threat

Iran, From Flap

The head of Iran's military central command centre warned a US failure to lift the blockade would constitute "a prelude" to violating the two-week ceasefire struck on April 8. Unless Washington relents, Iran's armed forces "will not allow any exports or imports to continue in the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman and the Red Sea", said Ali Abdollahi.

The US Navy blockade of Iranian ports appeared to be working, with no Iran-linked ships visibly able to leave the region since the blockade took effect 48 hours earlier, according to US authorities and vessel-tracking firms.

Several vessels appear to have stopped or slowed after exiting the Strait of Hormuz into the Gulf of Oman.

BENGALURU SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT LIMITED
Office of the Deputy General Manager-1, 1st Floor,
BBMP Building, Thimmaiah Road, Vasanth Nagar, Bengaluru – 560 052

No: DGM-1/BSWML/PR/131/2026-27 Date: 15.04.2026

TENDER CANCELLATION NOTIFICATION
(Only through GOK KPP Portal Only)

This is to inform the general public and all concerned that below mentioned tender notifications issued by Deputy General Manager-1, BSWML on 10.03.2026 has been cancelled due to technical reasons.
1. Tender Notification No: DGM-1/BSWML/TEND/19/2025-26
2. Tender Notification No: DGM-1/BSWML/TEND/22/2025-26
3. Tender Notification No: DGM-1/BSWML/TEND/23/2025-26
4. Tender Notification No: DGM-1/BSWML/TEND/28/2025-26

Sd/-
DIPR/CP/186/SA/2026-27 Deputy General Manager -1, BSWML

ಮಹಾರಾಣಿ ಕ್ಲಸ್ಟರ್ ವಿಶ್ವವಿದ್ಯಾಲಯ
MAHARANI CLUSTER UNIVERSITY
ಅರಮನೆ ರಸ್ತೆ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು – 560001. Email:mcublr@gmail.com

ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ
(ಇ-ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮೂಲಕ ಮಾತ್ರ)
ಮಹಾರಾಣಿ ಕ್ಲಸ್ಟರ್ ವಿಶ್ವವಿದ್ಯಾಲಯವು ಅರ್ಹ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ದಾರರಿಂದ ಇ-ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮೂಲಕ ಈ ಕೆಳಕಂಡ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಆಹ್ವಾನಿಸಿದೆ.

MCU/2026-27/IND0003, Date: 08.04.2026
Supply, Installation and Maintenance of CCTV Cameras at Maharani Cluster University Campus, Bengaluru.

ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಮಾಹಿತಿಗಾಗಿ ವೆಬ್‌ಸೈಟ್ https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in ಗೆ ಭೇಟಿ ನೀಡಬಹುದಾಗಿದೆ.
ಡಿಐಪಿಆರ್/ಸಿಪಿ/191/ಸಿಸಿಎಲ್/2026-27 Sd/- Registrar

VISVESVARAYA JALA NIGAMA LIMITED
(A Government of Karnataka Enterprise)
Regd. Office: Visvesvaraya Jala Nigam Limited
No.148, Embassy Square, Ground Floor, Infantry Road, Bangalore - 560001, CIN No: U41000KA2016SGC097260
Ph: 080-22256688/22289966 Fax: 080-22264477
Email: mail@vjnl.in, Website: www.vjnl.in
Office of the Executive Engineer, Yettinahole Project Division No.4, Madhugiri, Tumkur Dist-572132
Ph: 08137-282112 Email-eeyetmadhugiri4@gmail.com

SI NO:EE/VINL/YHP/Div-No.4/Madhugiri/NIT- 01/2026-27 Date: 08.04.2026

Tender Notification: (Through KPP-Portal)

On Behalf of Managing Director, Visvesvaraya Jala Nigama Limited, Bangalore the Executive Engineer, VJNL, Yettinahole Project Division No.4, Madhugiri, Karnataka invites two tender document system from eligible Electrical contractors for the works, **1) Construction Of Rcc Box Under NH-48 (Old NH-4) By Box Pushing Technique At Ch: 26+895 Km (NH LHS Ch: 40+395 Km & NH RHS Ch: 40+425 Km) To Provide Crossing Of Gravity Main Of TG Halli And Ramanagara Gravity Feeder Under Yettinahole Project (Indent No. VJNL/2025-26/BR/WORK_INDENT493) & 2) Construction Of Rcc Box Under NH-75 (Old NH-48) By Box Pushing Technique At Ch:40+762 Km (NH Ch: 35+65 Km) To Provide Crossing Of Gravity Main Of TG Halli And Ramanagara Gravity Feeder Under Yettinahole Project. (Indent No. VJNL/2025-26/BR/WORK_INDENT495)** for an amount **Rs.490.69 Lakhs & Rs.454.42 Lakhs** on **"Percentage basis"** through KPP-Portal. The contractor's can download and submit the completed bid documents through e-procurement website www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in from **10.04.2026 to 12.05.2026 upto 5.30 PM, tenders shall be submitted through KPP-Portal** only. Details for EMD amount, Tender Processing fee, Tender Clarifications, Qualification of bidders, Tender Conditions etc., may be obtained through KPP-Portal.

The queries if any may be clarified from this office up to **30.04.2026, at 3.00 PM.** The bid will be opened on **14.05.2026, at 11.00 AM** in office of the Executive Engineer, VJNL, YHP Division No.04, Madhugiri The undersigned reserves all rights to accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reasons.

Sd/- Executive Engineer
VJNL, YHP, Division No.4, Madhugiri
DIPR/TUM/RO-11/26-27/Oysters

BANGALORE ELECTRICITY SUPPLY COMPANY LIMITED
(Wholly Owned Government of Karnataka Undertaking)

BRIEF TENDER NOTIFICATION
(Through KPP Portal Only))

BESCOM invites tender through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal for Procurement of 95 sq mm HTUG cable & 400A Double break GOS.

Sl. No.	Description	Enquiry No.
1	Procurement of 95sqmm HTUG cable	BESCOM/2026-27/IND0231
2	Procurement of 400A Double break GOS	BESCOM/2026-27/IND0232

Bid Documents available from : **16.04.2026 onwards,** Last date for Bid Submission : **16.05.2026, 17:00 Hrs.** Opening of Bid Document : **18.05.2026 at 11:00 Hrs.**
The Tender can be obtained through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal web-site **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** Aspiring Bidders need to register on Karnataka Public Procurement Portal. Further Bidders can take assistance with Karnataka Public Procurement Portal help desk contact numbers (+91-8046010000 +91-8068948777, 09240214000 & 09240214001) or email at **support@eprochelpdesk.com**

For Electricity Related Complaints Call: 1912
Download BESCOM MITHRA Mobile App.

Sd/-
Chief General Manager (Elec), Procurement, BESCOM, 2nd Floor, K.R. Circle, Bengaluru-560 001

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT, DIVISION, CHITRADURGA
No.EE:PWD:CTA:AE-1:Tender-02:2026-27 Dated:- 13.04.2026

SHOR TERM E-TENDER NOTIFICATION

Tenders are invited from registered Contractors in KPWD for the following work through KPPP Portal as per standard tender documents rules.
Name of work:- Two cover System:- Head of Account 5054-03-337-0-17-154 SH Improvements:- (1) Widening of Rampura Bypass Road (Old National Highway 150(A)) in Rampura Village limit Which is Handed Over to Public Work Departement in Molakalmuru Constituency, Molakalmuru Taluk (Working ch km 293.480 to 294.100) (W.I.35139) Estimate Cost Rs. in Lakhs:-200.00
Head of Account 8443 Deposit Contribution:- (2) Four laning of Bellary to Byrapura section of NH-150A from km.253.600 to km.308.550 on HAM mode under Bharatmala Pariyojana in the State of Karnataka- Improvement of exisiting road in Bypassed/ Realigned Sections under one time development upon deposition of funds by NHAI to PWD, GoK at Rampura Bypassed section and Amakundi Realigned Section (Working Chainage km 291.400 to 293.480 & km 294.100 to 296.200) and Amakundi Realigned Section (Working Chainage km 305.100 to 307.200) (W.I.35490) Estimate Cost Rs. in Lakhs:-157.93
Tender dates are as mentioned below: Late Date & time for Tender Queries/ Clarifications 18-04-2026 Time: 17.30
Last Date & time for receipt of tenders 21-04-2026 Time: 16.00
Date & time for opening of Technical Bid 22-04-2026 Time: 16.15
Date & time for opening of Financial Bid 24-04-2026 Time: 11.00
Further details can be obtained from this office and H.P. Company helpline Numbers 91 9240214000 and 91 9240214001.
DIPR/CTA/KSMCA/33/2026-27 Sd/- Executive Engineer PWD, Chitradurga.

KOLAR DISTRICT CO-OPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS SOCIETIES UNION LIMITED
NH-75, Huttur Post, Kolar – 563 102. Phone:08152 282300 Fax 08152 282303

E-PROCUREMENT - TENDER NOTIFICATION
No.Komul: P&I/ C.I./Tender/ 197 / 2026-27, Date:09.04.2026

The KOLAR DISTRICT CO-OPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS SOCIETIES UNION LIMITED, Kolar invites technical &commercial e-Tender through e-procurement portal (https://www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in) for insuring **cross breed heifers / cows / local cows / buffaloes** (without permanent total disability coverage) owned by members of Milk Producers Co-Operative Societies affiliated to Kolar District Co-Operative Milk Union Limited for a period of one year.
e-procurement tender's are invited from **"Eligible IRDAI registered public and co-operative sector general insurance companies"** who deal with the cattle insurance coverage for a period of one year.
The details are mentioned here under :

A	Access to e-tender portal	From10.04.2026 to 11.05.2026 before 5.30 pm
B	Last Date & Time for Tender Queries/ Clarifications	04.05.2026 up to 5.30 P.M
C	Last Date & Time for Submission of tenders	11.05.2026 up to 5.30 P.M
D	Date & Time for Opening of Technical Tender	13.05.2026 10.00 A.M onwards
E	Date& Time for Opening of Commercial Tender	14.05.2026 10.00 A.M onwards
F	Place of Opening of Technical and Commercial Tenders	Kolar District Co-Operative Milk Producers Societies Union Limited (Komul) N.H-75, Huttur Post Kolar-563102.

The details of the Tender Fees, EMD Tender Terms & Conditions are available in e-procurement portal **(https://www.kppp .karnataka.gov.in)** for Verification.

Sd/- MANAGING DIRECTOR, KOMUL. (Tender Inviting Authority)

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ನೀರಾವರಿ ನಿಗಮ ನಿಯಮಿತ
(ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ಉದ್ಯಮ)
ಕಾರ್ಯನಿರ್ವಾಹಕ ಅಭಿಯಂತರವರ ಕಛೇರಿ, ಕ.ನೀ.ನಿ.ನಿ., ಮಬದಕಾನಿ ವಿಭಾಗ ನಂ. 3 ಬ್ಯಾಹಟ್ಟಿ, ತಾ : ಹುಬ್ಬಳ್ಳಿ
ಜಿ : ಧಾರವಾಡ 580023 ಫೋನ್ : 0836-2315225
ಫ್ಯಾಕ್ಸ್ : 2315226 e-mail : eemrbcc3byt@gmail.com
ಸಂ.ಕನೀನಿನಿ/ಮಬದವಿ-3/ಎ.ಇ-2/ಇ-ಟೆಂಡರ/2026-27/58 ದಿನಾಂಕ : 15-04-2026

ಟೆಂಡರ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ (ಇ-ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮುಖಾಂತರ)

ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥಾಪಕ ನಿರ್ದೇಶಕರು, ಕನೀನಿನಿ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರುರವರ ಪರವಾಗಿ ಕಾರ್ಯನಿರ್ವಾಹಕ ಇಂಜಿನೀಯರ್ ಕನೀನಿನಿ, ಮಬದಕಾನಿ ವಿಭಾಗ ಸಂ.3, ಬ್ಯಾಹಟ್ಟಿ ವ್ಯಾಪ್ತಿಯ 4701 ಲೆಕ್ಕಶೀರ್ಷಿಕೆ ಅಡಿ ಈ ಕೆಳಗೆ ನಮೂದಿಸಿರುವ ಇಂಡೆಂಟ ನಂಬರಿನ 01 ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗೆ ಶೇಕಡಾವಾರು ಟೆಂಡರನ್ನು ದ್ವಿ ಲಕೋಟೆ ಪದ್ಧತಿಯಲ್ಲಿ ಇ-ಪ್ರೋಕ್ಯೂರಮೆಂಟ ಮೂಲಕ ಆಹ್ವಾನಿಸಲಾಗಿದೆ.
Indent No :- 4043, ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಯ ಅಂದಾಜು ಮೊತ್ತ ರೂ. **100.00** ಲಕ್ಷಗಳು, ಇ.ಎಂ.ಡಿ ಮೊತ್ತ : ರೂ. **1,69,500/-**
ಇ-ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮೂಲಕ ಟೆಂಡರನ್ನು ದಿನಾಂಕ : **06/05/2026** ರ 4.00 pm ತನಕ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಬಹುದಾಗಿದೆ. ಬಿಡ್ ತೆರೆಯುವ ದಿನಾಂಕ : **08/05/2026** ರಂದು ಮುಂಜಾನೆ 11.00 am ರಿಂದ ಹಾಗೂ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿವಾರು ಇತರೆ ವಿವರಗಳನ್ನು ಇ-ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ವೆಬ್‌ಸೈಟ್ ಮುಖೇನ http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in ಮೂಲಕ ಪಡೆಯಬಹುದಾಗಿದೆ. ಹೆಚ್ಚಿನ ಮಾಹಿತಿಗಾಗಿ ಈ ಕಚೇರಿ ದೂರವಾಣಿ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ : **0836-2315225** ನ್ನು ಕಚೇರಿಯ ವೇಳೆಯಲ್ಲಿ ಸಂಪರ್ಕಿಸಬಹುದಾಗಿದೆ.

ಸಹಿ/- ಕಾರ್ಯನಿರ್ವಾಹಕ ಇಂಜಿನೀಯರರು, ಕನೀನಿನಿ, ಮಬದಕಾನಿ ವಿಭಾಗ ನಂ.3
ವಾಸಾಸಂಇ/ಧಾ/ಕೆಎಸ್‌ಎಂಸಿಎ/58/2026-27 ಬ್ಯಾಹಟ್ಟಿ

ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರ
ಯುವ ಸಬಲೀಕರಣ ಮತ್ತು ಕ್ರೀಡಾ ಇಲಾಖೆ
ರಾಜ್ಯ ಯುವ ಕೇಂದ್ರ, ನೃಪತುಂಗ ರಸ್ತೆ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು – 560001.
ದೂರವಾಣಿ: 080-22215601, 22211246 ಫ್ಯಾಕ್ಸ್ : 22215602

ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: ಕಕ್ರೀಪ್ರಾ/ಸಿ5/ 01/ 2026-27 ದಿನಾಂಕ: 15.04.2026

ತರಬೇತುದಾರರ ಗುತ್ತಿಗೆ ನೇಮಕಾತಿಗೆ ಅರ್ಜಿ ಆಹ್ವಾನ

ಮಹಾತ್ಮ ಗಾಂಧಿ ಜಿಲ್ಲಾ ಕ್ರೀಡಾಂಗಣ, ತುಮಕೂರು ಇಲ್ಲಿನ ಶೂಟಿಂಗ್ ರೇಂಜ್ ನಲ್ಲಿ ಕ್ರೀಡಾಪಟುಗಳಿಗೆ ತರಬೇತಿ ನೀಡಲು ಶೂಟಿಂಗ್ ತರಬೇತುದಾರರ ಸೇವೆಯನ್ನು ಆರು ತಿಂಗಳ ಅವಧಿಗೆ ತಾತ್ಕಾಲಿಕವಾಗಿ ಗುತ್ತಿಗೆ ಆಧಾರದ ಮೇಲೆ ಪಡೆಯಲು ಭಾರತದ ಅರ್ಹ ನಾಗರೀಕರಿಂದ ಅರ್ಜಿಯನ್ನು ಆಹ್ವಾನಿಸಿದೆ.

ಅರ್ಜಿ ಮತ್ತು ಇನ್ನಿತರೆ ಪೂರಕ ದಾಖಲೆಗಳನ್ನು ದಿನಾಂಕ: 22-04-2026 ರಂದು ಸಂಜೆ 4.00 ಗಂಟೆಯೊಳಗೆ ಮಹಾ ನಿರ್ದೇಶಕರು, ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಕ್ರೀಡಾ ಪ್ರಾಧಿಕಾರ, ರಾಜ್ಯ ಯುವ ಕೇಂದ್ರ, ನೃಪತುಂಗ ರಸ್ತೆ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು-56001 ಇವರಿಗೆ ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಬಹುದು.

ಅರ್ಜಿ ನಮೂನೆ ಹಾಗೂ ವಿವರಗಳನ್ನು ಯುವ ಸಬಲೀಕರಣ ಮತ್ತು ಕ್ರೀಡಾ ಇಲಾಖೆಯ ವೆಬ್‌ಸೈಟ್ www.dyes.karnataka.gov.in ನಲ್ಲಿ ಪಡೆಯಬಹುದು.

ಸಹಿ/-
ಆಯುಕ್ತರು
ಯುವ ಸಬಲೀಕರಣ ಮತ್ತು ಕ್ರೀಡಾ ಇಲಾಖೆ
ಹಾಗೂ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಕ್ರೀಡಾ ಪ್ರಾಧಿಕಾರ
DIPR/CP/187/Zen/2026-27

Department of Commercial Taxes
Office of the Commissioner of Commercial Taxes, VTK-1, Gandhinagar, Bengaluru - 560009

PRESS NOTE

Payment of Professional Tax under Karnataka Tax on Professions, Trades, Callings and Employments Act 1976 (As per Section 10)

1. All persons liable to pay tax under the Karnataka Tax on Professions, Trades, Callings and Employments Act 1976, shall obtain registration/enrolment and pay the taxes.

2. Every employer/self employed person who is liable to obtain registration or enrolment must do so within 30 (thirty) days from the commencement of their professions, trades, callings or employment through the online portal and shall pay the applicable tax.

3. Employers/self employed persons who already possess enrollment shall pay the professional tax for the Financial Year 2026-27 on or before 30th April, 2026.

4. Pursuant to the amendment made to Section 10 of Karnataka Tax on Professions, Trades, Callings and Employments Act 1976 vide Karnataka Act No. 22 of 2026 dated 27.03.2026 the following changes have been implemented under the Act:

(i) Enrolled persons (Certificate of enrolment (EC) holder) who have paid the required tax are not required to file a return.

(ii) As per Commissioner of Commercial Taxes Notification No. PT/CR/09/2025-26 dated 01/04/2026, enrolled persons exempted from payment of Professional Tax such as senior citizens, persons with disabilities, ex-servicemen etc., are not required to file a return, provided they submit the documents prescribed in the said notification.

5. For more information regarding registration/enrolment obligation and applicable tax rates under this Act, please visit the Department's website **gst.karnataka.gov.in / ptax.karnataka.gov.in**

Sd/-
Commissioner of Commercial Taxes, (Karnataka) Bengaluru
DIPR/CP/Zen/184/2026-27

This assembly election is Delhi vs Tamil Nadu. We must win as the Tamil Nadu team. We must chase away the Delhi team.
An atmosphere of terror has been created in the state by the TMC. West Bengal has been destroyed by the party.

DH DECCAN HERALD

Political Theatre

West Bengal MLAs: Key Facts

Polling **April 23 & 29**

Counting **May 4**

Criminal cases

47% MLAs (136/291) **Have criminal cases**

37% MLAs (109/291) **Face serious charges**

Break-up

Murder cases	Attempt to murder
8 MLAs	**29 MLAs**
Crimes against women	Rape cases
22 MLAs	**1 MLA**

Party-wise criminal cases

TMC **92/223** 41%

BJP **42/64** 66%

Wealth profile

Crorepatis **52% MLAs**

Average per MLA **Rs 2.82 cr**

Total assets **Rs 821.5 cr**

Party-wise average assets

TMC: **Rs 3.27 cr**

BJP: **Rs 1.07 cr**

BGPM (1 MLA) **Rs 18.23 cr**

Education		Age profile	
Up to Class 12	Graduate & above	25–50 years	51–70 years
36%	**63%**	**43%**	**57%**

Gender representation: Women MLAs **15%** (45/291)

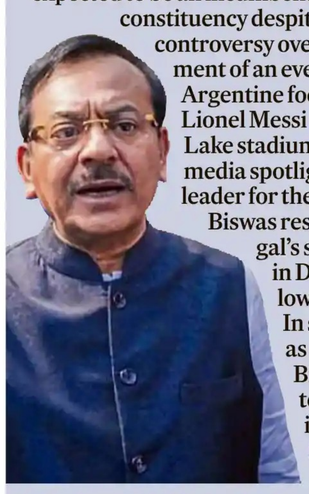
Sample size: MLAs analysed **291 out of 294**

Source: ADR report, PTI

Meet the leader

Aroop Biswas
Trinamool Congress
Tollygunge, South 24 Parganas

A cabinet minister in Mamata Banerjee's government, Aroop Biswas won the Tollygunge seat of south Kolkata on a TMC ticket in four successive assembly polls. Biswas is expected to be an incumbent from the same constituency despite the recent controversy over mismanagement of an event featuring Argentine football icon Lionel Messi at Kolkata's Salt Lake stadium, which put media spotlight on the TMC leader for the wrong reasons.



Biswas resigned as Bengal's sports minister in December following the fiasco. In spite of quitting as sports minister, Biswas continues to retain the important portfolios of power and housing.

Trivia

Two chief ministers have been defeated in the Assembly elections in Tamil Nadu along with the governments they led. In the 1952 elections, Chief Minister PS Kumaraswami Raja of the Congress was defeated in Srivilliputhur, though his party went on to form a coalition government with C Rajaji as chief minister. In 1967, Chief Minister M Bhaktavatsalam lost to DMK's D Irajarathinam at the height of the anti-Hindi agitation. About three decades later, J Jayalalithaa was defeated in Bargur, along with her government.

ELECTION TRAIL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami during a roadshow ahead of the Tamil Nadu Assembly elections in Nagercoil on Wednesday. Modi expressed confidence that the NDA would emerge victorious in the April 23 Assembly elections. PTI

Flags, faith and fiery jibes in Nandigram's TMC-BJP showdown

Suvendu Adhikari calls for unity as he takes on former aide Pabitra Kar

FROM THE GROUND

ANIRBAN BHAUMIK
NANDIGRAM, DHNS

"The Hindu villages here display Trinamool Congress flags, but BJP flags cannot be seen in Muslim villages," says Suvendu Adhikari, the saffron party's de facto chief ministerial candidate in West Bengal, as he addresses an evening rally at Binandapur in Nandigram.

"The BJP candidate cannot campaign in Muslim villages, but the TMC candidate can do so in Hindu villages," he goes on, and adds, "I have come here to know when you will unite."

He then seeks to clarify to his audience in the Hindu-majority village—decked with saffron flags inscribed Jai Sri Ram in Hindi—what he meant by his call for unity. He complains that if he receives just two votes in a polling booth set up in a madrasa, the TMC candidate will secure 800. By contrast, in a booth located in a high school with a Hindu-majority electorate, if he polls 400 of the 700 votes cast, the TMC secures 250 and others 50.

"I hope that if I do not get a single vote in the booths set up in the high madrasa, then you—who wear the tilak on your forehead, the tulsi around your neck, and whose mothers and sisters wear sindoor, shankha and pala—will also ensure that the TMC scores zero in your booth," he said, adding, "Did you understand?"

The crowd cheers, and Suvendu ends his speech with a 'Jai Sri Ram'.

Nandigram in Purba Medinipur district is a landmark in West Bengal's politics. In 2007, farmers agitated against the proposed acquisition of 10,000 acres of land by the then Left Front government for Indonesia's Salim Group to set up a chemical hub. The protest turned violent, and at least 14 people were killed when police opened fire during a crackdown on March 14. Mamata Banerjee, along with several social organisations, played a key role in the agitation, which helped the Trinamool Congress oust the Left Front from power and propelled her to the chief minister's office. At the time, Suvendu was a close aide of Mamata and played a pivotal role in the TMC's rise from the 2007-08 Nandigram movement.

BJP candidate for Bhabanipur and Nandigram Assembly constituencies Suvendu Adhikari during a religious procession in Kolkata. PTI FILE

TMC's Abhishek Banerjee with Pabitra Kar during his induction into the party. PTI

WEST BENGAL **Assembly Poll**

But much water has since flowed down the Haldi, the river that skirts Purba Medinipur. Nandigram now has a new claim to fame. This is where Suvendu, who quit the TMC in December 2020, contested against Mamata as the BJP's candidate in the March-April 2021 elections and defeated her by a narrow margin. He is contesting here again, while also taking on the TMC supremo in Bhabanipur.

Last month, Suvendu's aide Pabitra Kar quit the BJP and returned to the TMC. He is now the ruling party's candidate in Nandigram, contesting against his former mentor.

"Mamata herself did not dare to contest from Nandigram again. They brought someone to contest against me—someone nobody knows," says Suvendu.

"I decided to join the BJP to resist the hegemony that the 'Adhikari Private Limited Company' wanted to establish in Purba Medinipur," Kar takes a dig at the Adhikaris, as he leads a bike rally at Kendamari in Nandigram. "He (Suvendu) will surely lose, as people are no longer with him."

"Your (Mamata's) road to the CM's office was strewn with the blood of Mandigram martyrs. But you betrayed Nandigram," Suvendu hits out at the TMC supremo. He criticises Mamata for driving out industries, apparently referring to the agitation that he himself had helped mobilise.

Kar, however, promises a bridge over the Haldi, a stadium and a medical college in Nandigram.

As he emerged as the BJP's most firebrand leader in West Bengal, Suvendu wore Hindutva on his sleeve. "Jo hamare saath, hum unke saath (We are with those who are with us). Stop saying Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas (We are with all to ensure the welfare of all)," he declared after the BJP suffered a setback in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, adding, "There is no need for a minority morcha within the party."

Cauvery Delta farmers, once loyal, now restless with ruling DMK

Disillusionment over crop losses, loan waivers and input shortages makes contests tighter in 2026

FROM THE GROUND

E T B SIVAPRIYAN
THANJAVUR, DHNS

Villagers harvest paddy in a field in Thanjavur. PTI FILE

Gnanasundram, a farmer in Papanasam in the fertile Cauvery Delta region, voted for the DMK in the 2021 polls, breaking from his long-standing loyalty to the AIADMK, in the hope that the problems faced by farmers would be addressed as promised by Chief Minister MK Stalin.

"The government has not taken enough care of us. The compensation for crops damaged by floods is inadequate, and there is a perennial shortage of urea," Gnanasundram told *DH*, adding that he will not vote for the DMK this time.

The 59-year-old farmer is not alone. In Aaikudi village in Tiruvarur, the birthplace of late DMK patriarch M Karunanidhi, Rajendran said the ruling party had gone back on its promise to waive gold loans taken by farmers.

"Before the elections, they promised all gold loans would be waived. But once in power, they imposed several conditions. As a result, we lost money and feel cheated," Rajendran told *DH*.

However, a similar sweep may prove difficult this time. The AIADMK-BJP alliance is putting up a close fight in most constituencies, with many voters saying the outcome could go either way.

TAMIL NADU **Assembly Poll**

Discontent among farmers is visible across the Delta region, the rice bowl of Tamil Nadu. In the 2021 polls, the DMK won 40 of the 46 seats in the region, decimating the AIADMK-BJP combine and riding high on the negative sentiments against the saffron party.

But it may be difficult for the DMK to achieve a sweep in Central this election with the AIADMK-BJP giving a close fight in almost every seat with people saying it could go either ways.

Apart from anti-incumbency and farmer disillusionment, the alliance is also banking on the inclusion of TTV Dhinakaran's AMMK in the NDA to boost its prospects.

Actor Vijay's TVK is visible only in pockets, but younger voters and a section of women appear inclined towards the fledgling party. Meanwhile, S Seeman's NTK is drawing a notable share of votes in select constituencies, adding to the unpredictability.

A fifth player, VK Sasikala, is also in the fray, with her candidates targeting Mukulathor votes—potentially impacting the AIADMK-BJP alliance.

The farming community itself appears divided. Some appreciate what they describe as "fair" paddy procurement, while also flagging minor issues and welcoming price increases for various crops. Others point to unfulfilled promises.

While the unhappiness among farmers is palpable, the support for the DMK continue to remain among unaffiliated peasants. "We have an affinity towards the DMK since Kalaignar (Karunanidhi) hailed from here. And I did benefit from the schemes. My gold loan was waived," Manimaran said.

PR Pandian, president of the All Farmers' Association, accused the DMK of failing to fulfil its 2021 promises and prioritising industrial growth over farmers' interests.

"They have not fulfilled their promises. They said they would fix Rs 2,500 as the procurement price for a quintal of paddy immediately after coming to power. They went back on that promise and implemented it only towards the end of their tenure. I can go on listing more," he said.

Many farmers openly praise Palaniswami, saying they benefited during his tenure, but express reservations about his alliance with the BJP. "I would like to vote for the AIADMK, but I won't because of the BJP. If not for the BJP," said Mujibur Rahman, a farmer.

If anti-BJP sentiment continues to influence voting patterns, it could hurt the AIADMK-BJP alliance. The combine may also be affected by the Sasikala factor—even a few thousand votes for her candidates could alter outcomes. Complicating matters further, the BJP has fielded candidates in five seats, including three in Pudukkottai, where it has limited presence.

POLL DIGEST

HC seeks I-T report on Udhayanidhi

CHENNAI, PTI: The Madras High Court on Wednesday sought a report from the Income Tax Department on alleged discrepancies in the poll affidavits of Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin, who is seeking re-election from the Chepauk-Thiruvallikeni constituency in Chennai.

Udhayanidhi Stalin

A division bench directed the Director General of I-T (Investigation) and the Ministry of Corporate Affairs to submit a status report while hearing a plea filed by R Kumaravel.

The petitioner alleged discrepancies between Udhayanidhi's 2026 and 2021 affidavits, claiming a "disappearance" of over Rs 7 crore in investments. The bench posted the case to April 20 for further hearing.

Mamata claims central forces stopped car

ISLAMPUR (WB), PTI: A day after the TMC alleged "intrusive checks" on its leaders, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday claimed central forces tried to search her car near Kolkata airport.

Mamata Banerjee

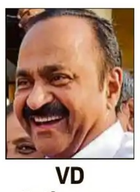
Addressing a rally in Islampur, she questioned why similar checks were not conducted on BJP leaders.

"Central forces tried to check my car today near Dum Dum airport. I told them to go ahead. If TMC leaders are being checked, why not the prime minister, home minister or other BJP leaders?" she said.

Mamata also accused the BJP of misusing central agencies and bringing "unaccounted money" into poll-bound Bengal.

She added that she had allowed the search, but the personnel "ran away".

Satheesan retreats to hills ahead of results



VD Satheesan

IDUKKI, PTI: After an intense election campaign in Kerala, Congress leader VD Satheesan has taken a break at a resort in Kuttikanam ahead of the May 4 results.

He shared photos and videos from the trip with family on social media on Wednesday. During the campaign, Satheesan had said he would go on political "vanavas" if the UDF failed to secure a decisive win, drawing jibes from LDF leaders.

"In the forest... not for vanavas, but for a strong comeback," Satheesan posted, hinting at confidence in the outcome. He also shared a trekking video.

POLITICAL ECLIPSE

From power centre to silence: Alagiri's retreat in Madurai

E T B SIVAPRIYAN
MADURAI, DHNS

Until 2014, the TVS Nagar residence of the once-powerful M K Alagiri in Madurai used to be a hub of hectic political activity, especially during elections.

Today, the bungalow wears a deserted look.

As Madurai goes to the polls on April 23, the man who lorded over the temple city for decades remains confined to his bungalow, forcefully retired from politics.

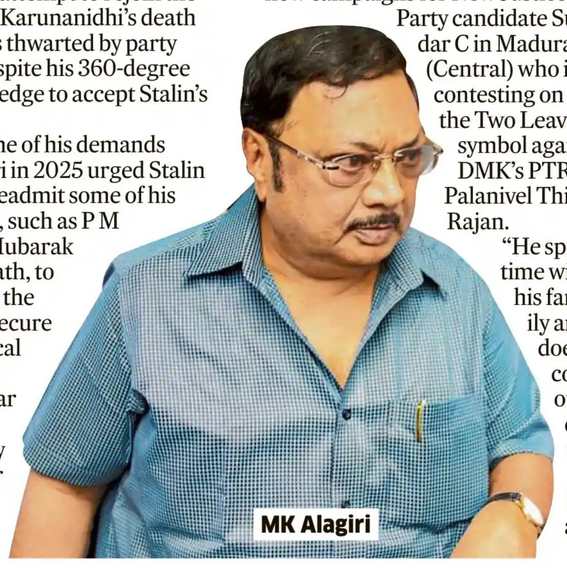
Alagiri was once the most powerful DMK leader in southern Tamil Nadu, wielding immense clout whenever the party was in power. His supporters would turn his birthday celebrations into a festival in Madurai.

With his younger brother M K Stalin now firmly in control of the DMK, Alagiri is rarely seen in public, let alone at political events. It took over a decade for the brothers to rebuild ties, with Stalin visiting Alagiri's residence only in June 2025, despite making multiple trips to Madurai as CM.

Alagiri's attempt to rejoin the DMK after Karunanidhi's death in 2018 was thwarted by party seniors, despite his 360-degree turn and pledge to accept Stalin's leadership.

With none of his demands met, Alagiri in 2025 urged Stalin to at least readmit some of his supporters, such as P M Mannan, Mubarak and Gopinath, to strengthen the party and secure their political future. He made it clear he was not seeking any position for himself, but did not want his loyalists to pay the price.

However, the DMK and Stalin refused, and in February, Mannan joined the AIADMK first. Mannan now campaigns for New Justice Party candidate Sundar C in Madurai (Central) who is contesting on the Two Leaves symbol against DMK's PTR Palanivel Thiaga Rajan.



MK Alagiri

"He spends time with his family and doesn't come out often. He lives a non-political life. He rarely meets people but remains in good spirits," a close aide of Alagiri told *DH*.

Mannan had been one of Alagiri's key lieutenants and was credited with devising the controversial "Thirumangalam formula", openly bribing voters to back DMK candidates.

Alagiri was not just a grassroots strongman but also a shrewd organiser who helped revive the DMK when it was out of power between 1991 and 1996. He kept the flock together after Vaiko's exit in 1993, one of the party's biggest crises since MG Ramachandran founded AIADMK in 1972 after his expulsion from the DMK.

A deft organiser with ears to the ground (though never seen as a mass leader), Alagiri excelled in micro-level planning, his aides say, focusing on booths to dominate southern Tamil Nadu's nine districts without a formal post.

His first official position, as South Zone Organising Secretary, came only in 2009.

Fondly called Anja Nenjan (Brave Heart) by his supporters, Alagiri was seen as a "tough captain". But his temper and uncompromising style often worked against him. Suspended from the DMK twice, he is believed to have contributed to the defeat of Stalin's allies in the 2001 Assembly polls during his first suspension.

Over time, Alagiri lost clout as Stalin won over his loyalists, controlling the DMK with Karunanidhi's backing. He stayed low-profile until his father's death; post-2018 rebellion bids fizzled.

Though part of the DMK's first family, Alagiri was always a rebel. He saw Stalin as his biggest rival, alienating Karunanidhi, who groomed his younger son as heir. Alagiri resented the preferential treatment towards Stalin's camp and often clashed with his father.

India wins first gold at European Olympiad

MUMBAI, DHNS: India won three medals, including a gold, at the 15th European Girls' Mathematical Olympiad (EGMO) 2026, held in Bordeaux, France, from April 9-15.

This was the first ever gold medal won by an Indian contestant at EGMO. While Shreya Shantanu Mundhada from Mumbai won gold, Sanjana Philo Chacko from Kerala won silver and Shivani Barath Kumar from Tamil Nadu bagged a bronze. The team also secured an impressive 6th position out of 67 participating countries, making it India's highest ranking since its debut in the Olympiad in 2015.

The team was led by Dr Vaidehee Thatte, Dr Mrudul Thatte and Aditi Muthkhod. Notably, this is the second time that India sent an all-woman contingent to EGMO.

The 2026 edition of EGMO witnessed participation from 260 students representing 67 countries, including 161 participants. India has been participating in the Olympiad as a guest nation since 2015.

Girls outperform boys yet again in CBSE 10th results

Southern regions lead performance

NEW DELHI, DHNS

Girls have outperformed boys in the CBSE Class 10 board examination once again, with the pass percentage among girls at 94.99% and boys at 92.6%. The overall pass percentage stands at 93.70%, reflecting steady academic performance.

This year, 24.7 lakh students appeared for the exams, while 24.83 lakh students had registered. Of these, 23.16 lakh students have qualified. This marks a marginal improvement from last year, when the pass percentage stood at 93.66%. In comparison, 23.71 lakh students had appeared for the exams last year. The results were declared earlier than usual this year, unlike last year when they were announced on May 13, owing to a structural change in the examination calendar.

South Indian regions emerged as the top performers, with Thiruvananthapuram and Vijayawada recording pass percentages of 99.79% each, followed by Chennai at 99.58%. Kendriya Vidyalayas achieved the highest institutional pass rate at 99.57%, continuing their strong track record.

Consistent with its policy since 2020, the board did not release a merit list or declare toppers. Instead, merit certificates will be awarded to the top 0.1% of students in each subject via DigiLocker.

Students can access their results and download marksheets through official portals, including results.cbse.nic.in and cbse.gov.in, as well as DigiLocker, the UMANG app, and SMS services.

NHAI asks FASTag issuer banks to validate vehicle registration numbers

NEW DELHI, DHNS

The National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) said on Wednesday it has issued directions to all FASTag issuer banks to undertake immediate validation of Vehicle Registration Numbers (VRNs) to enhance the accuracy and reliability of data in the electronic toll collection system.

The direction comes in the wake of complaints where the VRN captured by FASTag readers did not match the actual registration number displayed on the vehicle number plate, NHAI said in a statement.

Such discrepancies have the potential to undermine enforcement mechanisms and may lead to revenue evasion and also attract other penal provisions under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, NHAI said.

It has been observed that a considerable number of such mismatches are associated with FASTags issued prior to their issuance with the VAHAN database, the statement said.

During that period, validation mechanisms were relatively limited and relied more on manual processes, leading to potential inconsistencies in vehicle identification records, it noted. NHAI said it has emphasised that ensuring the correctness of VRN mapping with FASTag is of critical importance, especially in view of upcoming technology-driven initiatives such as Multi-Lane Free Flow (MLFF) tolling.

TO CORRECT DATA

- The move follows complaints of mismatched VRNs, with NHAI warning that incorrect FASTag data could lead to revenue loss and enforcement issues, especially with upcoming Multi-Lane Free Flow tolling, where inaccurate tags may be blacklisted.

Under the MLFF framework, enforcement actions, including the issuance of electronic notices (e-Notices) to non-compliant vehicles, will significantly depend on accurate and verified vehicle identification data.

"In this context, all FASTag issuer banks have been directed to undertake urgent verification of FASTags issued by them and to blacklist those FASTags that are found to be linked with incorrect or invalid VRNs, in accordance with established government guidelines," NHAI said.

Lucknow slum fire destroys 200 shanties

LUCKNOW (UP), PTI: A massive fire broke out at a slum cluster in the Vikas Nagar area of the state capital on Wednesday evening, destroying about 200 shanties and causing widespread panic among locals.

The fire was largely under control, officials said, adding that no loss of life or serious injuries were reported in the initial assessment. The blaze, which started in the late afternoon in a vacant plot near the Ring Road, spread rapidly due to strong winds and the presence of flammable materials in the huts.

Locals said that several small LPG cylinders exploded in the heat; however, there was no official confirmation.

Govt to roll out scheme to boost mobile phone export

NEW DELHI, DHNS: In a significant push to make India a global smartphone export powerhouse, the Centre is set to roll out a new production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme worth Rs 46,000 crore.

The fresh incentive package — expected to be unveiled as LSEM-2 (Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing) next month — aims to ramp up mobile phone exports from the country, building on the strong foundation laid by the first scheme.

The Ministry of Electronics and IT launched LSEM-1 in 2020 to boost domestic mobile phone manufacturing, with an outlay of Rs 40,995 crore.

The LSEM-2 is aimed at boosting exports of mobile phones and further strengthening India's position as a global manufacturing hub for smartphones, sources said.

The Ministry of Electronics and IT is in discussions with the Finance Minister on the PLI, after which it will be placed before the Cabinet for final approval, sources said.

According to official data, smartphones worth Rs 2.62 lakh crore (about USD 28 billion) were exported in 2025, with Apple emerging as the poster boy of the scheme. Total exports under the scheme till February 2026 have crossed Rs 6.2 lakh crore, which is 27 per cent more than the target of Rs 4.87 lakh crore set under the LSEM-1 scheme.

MISCELLANY

◆ COMICS ◆

Blondie

WELL, THIS BIRD SURE SEEMS HAPPY! LISTEN TO HIM SING!
TWEET!
OH, HE IS!
HE GETS THIS WAY EVERY JANUARY 5TH...
WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT JANUARY 5TH?
IT'S NATIONAL BIRD DAY!
TWEET!!

Hagar The Horrible

HAGAR! YOU ATE THE LAST OF THE BROWNIES! I WAS SAVING THEM FOR TOMORROW!
YOU KNOW THE OLD SAYING--"DON'T PUT OFF FOR TOMORROW WHAT YOU CAN EAT TODAY"!
THAT IS NOT THE OLD SAYING!

Beetle Bailey

I'M SORRY, BEETLE, I WON'T BE JOINING YOU FOR CHRISTMAS. I GOT ANOTHER OFFER
NOW THAT'S A CHRISTMAS PRESENT!
GREG + MORT WALKER
12/23

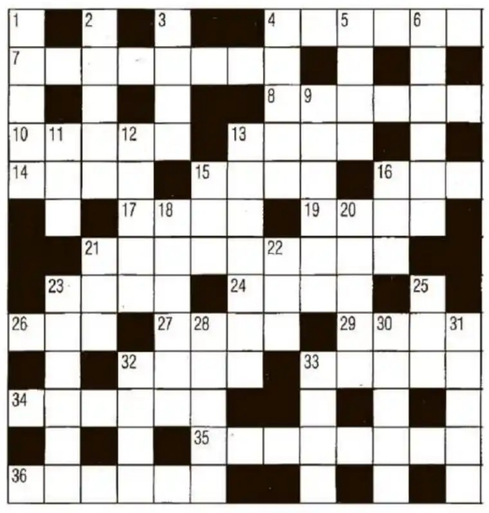
Peanuts

AH! THE FIRE INSPECTOR!
CHECKING EVERYTHING OUT, I SEE...
REALLY? THAT'S NICE TO KNOW...
IF YOU KEEP YOUR WATER DISH FILLED, IT CUTS DOWN ON YOUR FIRE INSURANCE!

Marvin

THE QUESTIONS EVERYONE ON THE PLANET IS ASKING...
WITHOUT SNOW, WILL SANTA HAVE TO DELAY HIS CHRISTMAS DELIVERIES
NIT WORK NEWS
...UNTIL NEXT YEAR!
WAH!

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 12396



ACROSS

4 Nullify (6)
7 Food of the gods (8)
8 Married Spanish woman (6)
10 Noblemen (5)
13 Suspend (4)
14 Satisfy (4)
15 Flash of lightning (4)
16 Jewel (3)
17 Group of three (4)
19 Cupid (4)
21 Flowed windingly (9)
23 Indian dress (4)
24 Girl (4)
26 Faucet (3)
27 Pronounce indistinctly (4)
29 Eye part (4)
32 Thailand, formerly (4)
33 Trap (5)
34 Study of plants (6)
35 Alienate (8)
36 Public speaker (6)

DOWN

1 Opposite of heads (5)
2 Terminate prematurely (5)
3 Decomposes (4)
4 Of the nose (5)
5 Medal, slang (4)
6 Conservatives (6)
9 Goes in (6)
11 Rowing blade (3)
12 Discourage (5)
13 Petty gangster (7)
15 Put rubbish in this (3)
16 Deity (3)
18 Dried grape (6)
20 Tree sap (5)
21 Orienteering item (3)
22 Wheat spike (3)
23 Relish (6)
25 Tree type (3)
28 Stratum (5)
30 Wet or showery (5)
31 Main drain (5)
32 Condiment (4)
33 Ride on waves (4)

CRYPTIC

ACROSS

4 Pay for the loud music Dora's upset about (6)
7 A machine on hire, perhaps, or inherited (8)
8 Garments for professional people? (6)
10 In one short month, we do a clean job (5)
13 Might it taste better in the absence of a teetotaller? (4)
14 Sort of cat a chap gets cross with? (4)
15 There's little point in removing it from rabbit stew (4)
16 It's a very good seat (3)
17 Make an issue of something (4)
19 Is this river in some way mountainous? (4)
21 Shocking, though seemingly quite proper to a fathead (9)
23 Pilots have plenty (4)
24 Connoisseur of colour? (4)
26 She joins me at golf (3)
27 Remnant of brass tubing (4)
29 Harsh criticism dangerous to airmen (4)
32 Has he a chapter to himself? (4)
33 Eleven on the shelf? (5)
34 A gentle kiss from Mercedes? (6)
35 One not easy to knock the stuffing out of (5,3)
36 Foolish mixture to wear? (6)

DOWN

1 At Minehead, Charles is in a terrible hole (5)
2 She figures ways to be foxy (5)
3 When there's a panic, Alf turns quiet (4)
4 Bream colour? (5)
5 A noisy tune is reasonable (4)
6 Stagger round for a bit of fun and get some more juice (6)
9 About to polish one's rude answer (6)
11 Soft, but it will get stronger (3)
12 Put forth effort and figure to get up in a tree (5)
13 Something to eat after a clean-up? (4,3)
15 It's great to be back from Gibraltar! (3)
16 Wash up, mate (3)
18 Girls one notices being absent (6)
20 As once worn by roughs, we hear? (5)
21 It doesn't make for good viewing (3)
22 Vessel returning with some halibut (3)
23 Played smoothly to leg out of the middle of the bat (6)
25 Caught in a shady deal (3)
28 Thanks for the pen, it's very nice (5)
30 Language I long to learn? (5)
31 In Africa, get to know some Yanks (5)
32 A handy transaction (4)
33 Ship with only half a yard to move? (4)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 12395

CRYPTIC

ACROSS: 1, Pancho 7, Gathered 8, M-all 10, H-OO-poe 11, Arm-Ada 14, Leg 16, Panel 17, Dell 19, PO-LL-y 21, Dela-y 22, So-gg-y 23, Bits 26, Resew 28, P-E-R 29, Ar-can-e 30, Docile 31, Amos 32, Chain saw 33, Nieces.
DOWN: 1, Pu-shed 2, Chape-L 3, O-gle 4, S-harp-ly 5, Organ 6, Ideal 8, Mo-LL 9, Log 12, May 13, D-elft 15, V-Olga 18, Ei-G-er 19, Peg 20, Lay 21, Downing 22, Sea 23, Become 24, I-ris 25, SW-edes 26, Ranch 27, S-C-rag 28, Pom 30, Dawn.

EASY

ACROSS: 1, Scampi 7, Corridor 8, Silo 10, Leaden 11, Ankara 14, Get 16, Oiled 17, Soon 19, Debut 21, Bacon 22, Elbow 23, Rasp 26, Adore 28, Tub 29, Solemn 30, Select 31, Heel 32, Envisage 33, Duster.
DOWN: 1, Stilts 2, Maiden 3, Icon 4, Pronoun 5, Ideal 6, Bread 8, Sago 9, Let 12, Kit 13, Reaps 15, Decoy 18, Outdo 19, Dab 20, Bow 21, Blemish 22, Ere 23, Rulers 24, Abel 25, Putter 26, Ashes 27, Olive 28, Tee 30, Shed.

◆SU-DO-KU-6881◆

				5	2			1
		3	6	8		4	9	
1							3	
		1		6			5	
4	3						2	6
	9			2		3		
	1							3
	4	7		3	9	8		
			8	7				

hard

SOLUTION TO 6880

4	8	6	1	2	9	3	7	5
7	3	9	6	4	5	2	1	8
2	5	1	7	8	3	4	6	9
6	2	5	9	1	4	8	3	7
1	4	8	3	7	2	5	9	6
9	7	3	5	6	8	1	2	4
8	6	2	4	9	1	7	5	3
3	9	4	2	5	7	6	8	1
5	1	7	8	3	6	9	4	2

To solve the puzzle: To solve a su-do-ku puzzle, every digit from1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows, and in each of the nine boxes.

SCRABBLE™

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							Triple Word Score	RACK 1
Y4	K5	M3	N1	E1	O1	N1		
							Triple Word Score	RACK 2
T1	N1	E1	A1	S1	N1	C3		
							Triple Word Score	RACK 3
R1	C3	A1	A1	T1	B3	O1		
							Triple Word Score	RACK 4
N1	E1	I1	E1	D2	G2	H4		

PAR SCORE 190-200
by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in the Collins English Dictionary. JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

R1	O1	U1	T1	E1	R1		
I1	L1	I1	U1	M3			
A1	N1	A1	E1	M3	I1	C3	
T1	W4	E1	N1	T1	Y4		

RACK 1 = 6
RACK 2 = 13
RACK 3 = 61
RACK 4 = 24
JUDD'S TOTAL 104

PAR SCORE 65-75

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

GIDIT
ANGDR
NCSAAV
RFEUUT

I'm not buying the Scottish accent. It makes it hard to believe your lines.
I'm from Edinburgh! You can't adlib Shakespeare!
Let's get back to rehearsal! Scene seven, please.
10 4
THE STAGE PERFORMERS SOMETIMES HAD PROBLEMS WHEN IT CAME TO ---

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Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Ans. here: (Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: CLOVE AUDIT PROVEN ALLEGE
Answer: The designer high heels that made her four inches taller came with an — ELEVATED PRICE

HITORI-3335

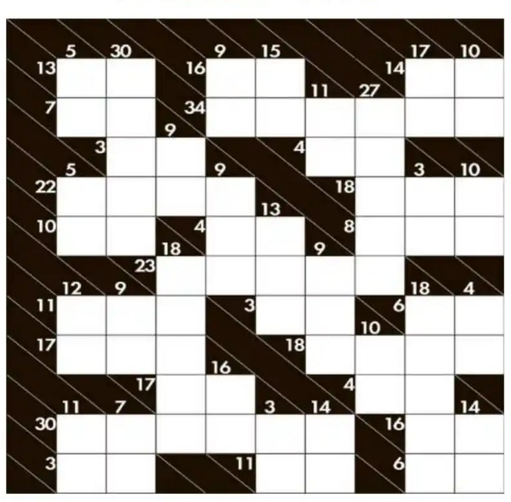
8	1	6	2	4	3	7	1
6	8	7	5	8	4	4	1
1	5	1	1	2	1	6	7
2	7	8	3	4	7	4	1
1	7	4	1	8	5	2	3
5	1	2	6	1	8	1	4
1	1	3	5	5	6	8	1
7	4	1	8	3	6	1	6

SOLUTION TO 3334

2	■	4	8	7	3	6	■
5	6	1	■	4	■	2	3
■	4	■	1	■	7	■	2
3	■	5	6	1	4	7	8
7	5	■	2	3	6	1	■
■	7	6	4	8	2	3	1
8	■	2	7	6	1	■	4
6	8	7	■	2	5	4	■

To solve the puzzle: Eliminate numbers by filling in squares so that remaining cells in that row or column do not repeat that number more than once. Filled-in cells cannot be horizontally or vertically adjacent. The un-filled cells must form a single component connected horizontally and vertically.

KAKURO- 3335



SOLUTION TO 3334

To solve the puzzle: Put a number from 1 through 9 in a cell. No zeros. A number in a cell separated by diagonal line tells the sum of numbers in consecutive cells at its right or downward. No number may appear more than once in consecutive cells.

SU DO KU X - 3887

■								■
	■						■	
	7	3		8	9	■	4	5
6	3		5	1	■		7	
		9		■		4		
		4	8		■			
	8	■				■		
4	■			7	3		9	2
■			1				3	■

SOLUTION TO 3886

6	7	1	3	4	8	5	2	9
3	5	4	1	2	9	6	7	8
9	2	8	6	7	5	3	4	1
4	8	7	9	3	6	1	5	2
5	6	3	7	1	2	9	8	4
1	9	2	8	5	4	7	6	3
8	3	5	4	9	7	2	1	6
7	4	9	2	6	1	8	3	5
2	1	6	5	8	3	4	9	7

To solve the puzzle: The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

DELIMITATION ISSUE: Oppn claims move sidelines caste census data and may disadvantage smaller states

Rahul slams govt over 'attempted power grab'

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Claiming that the proposed delimitation has nothing to do with the implementation of 33% women's quota, Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said on Wednesday that it was an "attempted power grab" through redrawing constituencies and "gerrymandering".

In a video posted on his social media handles, Rahul said the bill to amend the Constitution seeking to increase the number of Lok Sabha seats to 850 for the early implementation of women's quota is an attempt by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to "snatch" the rights of OBCs, as he wants to use the 2011 census that contains no such data.

"The Prime Minister does not want this decision to be taken based on a new census, a caste census, or an OBC census. He wants to use the 2011 census, which contains no data on Backward Classes. He wants to snatch away your right to participate," he said.

"What the government is proposing now has nothing to do with women's reservation. This amendment is an attempted power grab using delimitation and gerrymandering. We will not allow 'Hissa Chori' from OBC, Dalit and Adivasi communities by ignoring the caste census data. We will also not allow Southern, North Eastern, North Western and smaller states to be treated unfairly," he posted in a video on 'X'.

Rahul Gandhi speaks on the women's reservation bill. PTI

Rahul claimed that Modi wants to send a message to the country that he is "pro-woman", as he is panicked by the Epstein files. "3.5 million files are locked away in the US, the key is with Donald Trump, and you are scared of that. But this is not the way," he said.

He said the Congress wants the government to use the data from the 2027 Census, which has already begun, as the caste count will also be included.

"We are asking the central question: What is the actual participation of OBCs, Dalits and tribals in this country?" he said.

He alleged that Modi, RSS and BJP were panicking as the caste census data began to emerge, realising the true scale of backward classes' population. He claimed they did not want representation to be based on actual numbers.

NUMBER GAME IN LOK SABHA

FOR 298

- BJP (239) • TDP (16)
- JD-U (12) • Shiv Sena (7)
- LJP-RV (5) • YSR Cong (4)
- JD-S (2) • Janasena (2)
- RLD (2) • AJSU (1)
- Apna Dal-S (1) • AGP (1)
- HAM-S (1) • NCP (1)
- RLP (1) • SKM (1)
- UPPL (1) • Ind (1)

NOT KNOWN / UNDECIDED - 4

- ZPM (1) • Ind (3)

AGAINST 238

- Congress (98)
- Samajwadi Party (37)
- Trinamool Congress (28)
- DMK (22) • Shiv Sena-UBT (9)
- NCP-Pawar (8)
- RJD (4) • CPM (4)
- AAP (3) • Muslim League (3)
- JMM (3) • CPI(ML)L (2)
- National Conference (2)
- VCK (2) • Kerala Congress (1)
- MDMK (1) • RSP (1) • BAP (1)
- ASP-Kanshiram (1)
- Akali Dal (1) • AIMIM (1)
- Ind (3)

• I.N.D.I.A bloc with 235 MPs has publicly announced it will vote against the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill. It is not clear whether other parties will actually vote against, abstain, or walk out when voting takes place

Stalin's black flag appeal to protest against 'injustice'

CHENNAI/HYDERABAD, DHNS

Upping the ante on the proposed amendment on delimitation, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK President M K Stalin on Wednesday appealed to all and sundry to hoist black flags in every house and public place to protest against the "injustice" against southern states.

"The sword that hung over our heads has now descended upon us. In consultation with our DMK MPs, we are reaching out to MPs across states and devising a coordinated strategy to counter this grave danger," Stalin said, terming the delimitation exercise as the Damocles Sword hanging over Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Telangana, which together account for 129 Lok Sabha seats.

"I appeal to all parties and MPs across India to unite to safeguard our democracy," he added.

Pointing out BJP's intention to not allow Tamil Nadu to prosper, Stalin urged people in the state to hoist black flags to express the state's opposition to the amendment to be introduced in Parliament.

MK Stalin

Tamil Nadu is going to polls on April 23.

Raising concerns about the delimitation prioritising the northern states, Stalin said the southern states controlled population on the advice of the Union Government and that they must not be punished for doing so.

BRS opposition

Telangana's BRS working president K T Rama Rao, too, warned that using population as the basis for increasing parliamentary seats would penalise southern states. He said southern India currently accounts for approximately 24% representation in the Lok Sabha, and this proportion must be protected, and "any attempt to alter this will face strong resistance".

Kerala CM asks Centre to drop plan to 'sabotage democracy'

ARJUN RAGHUNATH
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHNS

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday expressed concerns over the Union government's proposed delimitation exercise and demanded that it drop the move.

In a statement, Vijayan said that it needs to be strongly suspected as a move by the BJP-led government to sabotage the federal structure of the state by reducing the representation of states like Kerala that made achievements in controlling population, whereas north Indian states that failed to control population may get more representation in the Parliament.

According to the CM, there is a widespread concern that the move is aimed at converting the political dominance of northern states, based on population, into increased Lok Sabha seats, thereby securing long-term political power.

"It seems that vested political interests were being implemented under the guise of increasing women's representation. There is no doubt that women's representation needs to be increased in politics. But denying equal rights to all states amounted to sabotage of democracy. The state government is going ahead with such crucial measures without arriving at a consensus with the state," he added.

Vijayan also said that taking up the delimitation bill at a time when the election to four states and one Union Territory is yet to be completed has raised genuine suspicions.

Vijayan pointed out that the proposed Bill will seriously affect equal justice to all states. "Democracy not just pertains to the number of seats won. It should ensure equal justice and representation for all sections," he said.

The veteran leader said the message that "controlling population leads to loss, while failing to control it brings gains" is dangerous for the country's democratic direction.

Against BJP's cunning ploy: SP

Samajwadi Party on Wednesday made clear that the opposition will "not tolerate" the Modi government's "gerrymandering" of constituencies through delimitation, claiming that the ruling BJP is using the exercise to "create handpicked constituencies of their choosing" to "cling to power by any means".

Party chief and former UP chief minister Akhilesh Yadav said they are in favour of women's quota but against the BJP's "cunning ploy".

Andhra parties rally behind Bill

In a rare show of unity, Andhra Pradesh's ruling and opposition parties — TDP, Jana Sena and YSRCP — have pledged support for a constitutional amendment bill to increase the Lok Sabha seats, reports DHNS.

NDA allies TDP and JSP held a meeting on Wednesday. CM N Chandrababu Naidu, Dy CM Pawan Kalyan, BJP state chief PVN Madhav and TDP state president Palla Srinivasa Rao discussed action plans, including celebrations for the Bill.

South shortchanged: Oppn

NEW DELHI, DHNS

Concerns have been raised by the Opposition over the bill to amend the Constitution to increase Lok Sabha seats to 850 seats for rolling out 33% women's quota, as it does not propose any change to the existing provision of considering population as the basis for delimitation.

This, the Opposition claims, is detrimental to the interests of southern states, which have done well in controlling population, as well as states like Punjab, Haryana and northeastern states, compared to states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, which stand to gain more seats.

The Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, does not propose an amendment to Article 81(2)(a), which mandates that the Lok Sabha seats be allotted to each state "in such a manner that the ratio between that number and population of the state is, so far as practicable, the same for all states".

The government had earlier indicated during consultations with parties that the number of Lok Sabha seats would be increased by 50% for all states, though this was also opposed by parties like the Congress, DMK, CPM and AAP.

Based on the 2011 Census, UP's representation may rise from 80 to 140 seats (14.7% in the present Lok Sabha to 16.7%), Bihar from 40 to 73 (7.4% to 8.6%), Rajasthan from 25 to 48 (4.6% to 5.6%), Madhya Pradesh from 29 to 51 (5.3% to 6%) and Maharashtra from 48 to 79 (8.8% to 9.3%).

Southern states and others like Odisha and West Bengal may witness some increase, but the proportion will decrease.

Karnataka may see an increase from 28 to 42 seats (decrease from 5.5% to 4.94%), Tamil Nadu from 39 to 51 (7.2% to 6%), Kerala from 20 to 23 (3.7% to 2.7%), and West Bengal from 42 to 64 (7.7% to 7.5%).

The proportion of seats for northern states will rise from 22.1% to 25.1%, while that for southern states will decline from 20.1% to 18%.

Congress's Jairam Ramesh alleged that the bill contradicts all the "so-called assurances" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as states in the south, northwest and east will lose their strength in the Lok Sabha.

Attendance row rocks Oppn meet; Rahul says TMC absence will aid BJP

NEW DELHI, DHNS

The possible absence of some Trinamool Congress MPs due to campaigning in the West Bengal polls when Parliament passes the delimitation bill drew criticism at an Opposition meeting, with Congress leader Rahul Gandhi warning that it would be seen as helping the ruling BJP.

Sources said the issue was discussed at a meeting chaired by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge after Trinamool representative Sagarika Ghose told leaders that many of the party's MPs might not be present in Parliament as they would be busy campaigning.

Sources said Rahul stressed the need to ensure that all Opposition MPs are present. He warned that if Trinamool MPs were absent, it would be seen as helping the government.

Rahul then urged Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray to speak to Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee and impress upon her the importance of ensuring that all her party MPs fly to Delhi to attend Parliament.

At the meeting, sources said, DMK's TR Baalu said all his party MPs were attending despite intense campaigning in Tamil Nadu, and asked why Trinamool MPs could not do the same. Some Kerala leaders also noted that their MPs had come to Parliament in the midst of campaigning to oppose the FCRA (Amendment) Bill.

Incidentally, a group of Trinamool MPs, including Mahua Moitra and Kirti Azad, reached Delhi on Wednesday. "We are doing all that it takes to defeat the stunt being presented as a bill," Trinamool's Derek O'Brien posted on 'X'.

Pawan Khera

Apex court stays Telangana HC's interim relief to Khera

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Supreme Court on Wednesday stayed the Telangana High Court's April 10 order granting one-week transit anticipatory bail to Congress leader Pawan Khera in a case registered against him for saying Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife possessed multiple passports.

A bench of Justices J K Maheshwari and Atul S Chandurkar suspended the operation of the HC's order on a plea filed by the Assam government, expressing surprise with the decision.

The court clarified that had Khera applied for anticipatory bail in a court in Assam, this order would not have any adverse effect on consideration of his plea.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta for the Assam government contended that Khera's plea before the Telangana High Court was an abuse of the process of law. There was a patent lack of jurisdiction, the offence happened in Assam, the FIR was registered in Assam, he said.

The bench, however, pointed out, that it was submitted before the HC that Khera's wife resided in Hyderabad. To this, Mehta said his wife's Aadhaar card showed her as a resident of Delhi.

The court fixed the matter for consideration on May 13.

More MPs, fewer houses: Parl plan hits a housing wall

Expenditure set to rise if Lok Sabha expands

AMRITA MADHUKALYA
NEW DELHI, DHNS

As the new bills propose a Lok Sabha of 850 members, the government is looking at increased spending as well as a shortage of accommodation in the Lutyens Zone. A joint sitting of Parliament could also run into space issues.

According to conservative estimates, the government spends approximately Rs 1 lakh per member each day the House is in session. This does not account for salaries, travel allowances and medical facilities, in addition to the expenditure on each constituency. Officials said the biggest hurdle with the expanded numbers will be housing allocation, as residences in the Lutyens Zone are scarce.

LOOMING CRUNCH

- A House with 850 members raises cost and space concerns
- Parliament now spends Rs 1 lakh per MP per day
- Additional Rs 3 crore daily if membership hits 850
- Housing crunch: Only 850 bungalows in Lutyens Zone

Government sources said Parliament spends around Rs 1 lakh per member per day during a session, amounting to Rs 8 crore. If membership rises to 850, the daily expenditure is expected to increase by Rs 3 crore.

This is only the operational cost of running Parliament. Members of Parliament are entitled to salary and other perks. The current salary of an MP, as per the Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament Act, is Rs 1 lakh per month and a pension of Rs 25,000 in addition to Rs 2,000 for each year over a tenure of five years. Members are also entitled to accommodation, transit accommodation, and travel facilities such as free railway tickets, free phone connection, and free electricity and water up to a certain limit, adding up to an annual cost of Rs 4.29 crore to the state exchequer.

Estimates suggest that adding 272 new MPs to the existing tally would cost an additional Rs 1,171 crore annually in Parliament alone.

With the expansion of Assemblies and the addition of 4,000 new members, it could rise by another Rs 5,000-8,000 crore.

In the Lutyens Zone, there are about 850 bungalows. The pool for Lok Sabha members used to be 517 bungalows until 2015, after which 340 flats were added following the construction of over 8-9 complexes on Baba Kharak Singh Marg.

RSS event on JNU campus sparks row

NEW DELHI, PTI: A youth conclave organised by the RSS at the Jawaharlal Nehru University Convention Centre on Wednesday triggered sharp reactions on campus, with organisers hailing it as a platform for nation-building while the JNU students' union alleged an ideological attempt to influence academic spaces, that also violated university norms.

The event, titled 'Yuva Kumbh', was organised as part of the Sangh's centenary year celebrations, and based on the theme of '100 Years of Service and Dedication, and the Role of Youth in Nation-Building'.

Organisers alleged that "leftist elements" tried to create disturbances during the programme and demanded action from the university administration.

However, the JNU Students' Union (JNUSU) strongly opposed the event, terming it an "attack" on the university's ethos. "Official guidelines prohibit political and religious organisations from using this space," it said.

Maha sex scandal probe widens

MRITYUNJAY BOSE
MUMBAI, DHNS

As police dug deeper into the Amravati scandal involving a group of youth who allegedly sexually exploited over 180 girls and circulated more than 350 photos and videos, more details have emerged about how the accused lured victims through tuition and coaching classes.

So far, investigators have identified 18 videos and 39 photos.

Sources told *DH* on Wednesday that organised pornography rackets, blackmail and possible religious conversion angles are being probed.

BJP Rajya Sabha MP Anil Bonde said this was "just the tip of the iceberg" and urged Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis to form a Special Investigation Team.

"These boys come from simple backgrounds. So how were they getting the money, who was giving it to them? They themselves did not go to college but spent huge sums to take admission in coaching institutes. They would arrive on fancy bikes to impress and lure the girls," he added.

"Videos have been uploaded to pornographic sites. There is an issue of blackmail and possible religious conversion," he said, adding that the victims mainly include Hindu girls, though there were Muslim girls too.

One of the accused, Ayan Ahmed Tanveer, who has been arrested and remanded in police custody, was a worker with the AIMIM. Police have seized his phone and recovered several videos. He is suspected of sexually exploiting victims and recording videos without their consent

"The accused gang has raped dozens of young girls attending coaching institutes," said BJP leader Kirit Somaiya.

Bulldozer action

The family of the accused faced bulldozer action as the civic body demolished illegal portions of their house in Paratwada. "Notice was served; however, the illegal construction was not removed. Hence, it is being demolished," said Achalpur BJP MLA Pravin Tayade.

Gangster Kaushal's Rs 50-cr property bulldozed

GURUGRAM, PTI: The Gurugram police, in coordination with the district administration, on Wednesday intensified their crackdown on organised crime by bulldozing illegal properties linked to gangster Kaushal Chaudhary and drug trafficker Bhajan Lal, alias Gajepal, officials said.

In Naharpur Rupa village, police razed illegal structures linked to 45-year-old gangster Chaudhary, reclaiming around 1,500 square yards of land worth nearly Rs 50 crore belonging to the Haryana Shahari Vikas Pradhikaran.

Police said Chaudhary, a resident of the village, has 37 criminal cases against him, including murder, robbery, extortion and ransom.

According to the police, he entered the world of crime to avenge his brother's murder and settle a land dispute.

His wife, Manisha Chaudhary, also known as the "Lady Don", is in jail.

'STALE' CHEQUE

SC raps Canara Bank for negligence of duties

NEW DELHI, PTI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said banks act as agents for their customers and are under a "statutory obligation" to exercise due diligence and present a cheque for collection before it becomes "stale" as such a negligence constitutes a manifest deficiency in service.

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan held the Canara Bank guilty of deficiency in service for failing to present cheques within their validity period.

"A bank receiving cheques for collection acts as an agent of the customer and is under an obligation to exercise due diligence... The failure to do so, resulting in the instrument becoming stale, in the absence of any reasonable explanation, would result in negligence in the discharge of banking duties...," Justice Bhuyan said.

The verdict came on an appeal from the Canara Bank against the judgment of the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, which had ruled in favour of customer Kavita Chowdhary.

The dispute arose in May 2018, when Kavita and Priya Chowdhary deposited two cheques — dated March 3, 2018 — for approximately Rs 1.06 crore into their Canara Bank accounts. The cheques were set to expire on June 2, 2018.

A nationwide bank strike was called on May 30-31. The verdict found that the bank had failed to re-present the cheques on June 1 or June 2, which were functional working days. By the time the bank attempted to process the instruments, they had become "stale" and were rejected.

YSRCP leader detained over social media posts

HYDERABAD, DHNS: Andhra Pradesh police on Wednesday detained Pudi Srihari, a close aide of former chief minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy and senior YSRCP leader, over alleged provocative social media posts targeting Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. The posts reportedly contained violent and inflammatory language and visuals, prompting cases to be registered at a police station in Chittoor district.

Pudi Srihari

The detention triggered swift condemnation from YSRCP leaders, who called it an illegal arrest and a blatant assault on democratic rights. Senior leader Kurasaala Kannababu questioned whether Naidu and his son Nara Lokesh were upholding the Constitution or governing through extra-legal means. He alleged that Srihari was picked up in the manner of an abduction, with police arriving in plain clothes, and Srihari's name conspicuously absent from the FIR.

Kannababu demanded clarification from the Director General of Police and asked whether the force was functioning as an arm of the TDP.

Former minister Perni Nani described the detention as unlawful, arguing that Srihari, a journalist-turned-politician, had been treated as a criminal. He accused the government of deploying police machinery to intimidate political opponents.

West Asia conflict: 'Discussions about a second round of talks with Iranians ongoing'

White House denies US requested ceasefire

WASHINGTON, REUTERS/AFP

Reports that the White House has requested a ceasefire in the Iran war are wrong, press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters on Wednesday but added that discussions about a second round of talks with the Iranians were ongoing and productive.

Speaking at a White House press briefing, Leavitt said any fresh talks would likely be in Pakistan again as it has emerged as the "only mediator" in the effort to end the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran.

"These conversations are productive and ongoing, and that's where we are right now. I've also seen some reporting about the potentiality for in-person discussions. Again, those discussions are being had, but nothing is official until you hear it from us here at the White House, but we feel good about the prospects of a deal," Leavitt said.

The talks last weekend broke down without an agreement to end the war, which President Donald Trump began alongside Israel on February 28, triggering Iranian attacks on Iran's Gulf neighbors and reigniting a conflict between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah in Lebanon.

The war has led Iran to effectively shut the Strait of Hormuz - a vital artery for global crude and gas shipments - to ships other than its own, sharply reducing exports from the Gulf, particularly to Asia and Europe, and leaving energy importers scrambling for alternative supplies.

Exchanges continue: Iran

Iran said on Wednesday that exchanges with the United States via Pakistan had continued following failed negotiations over the weekend.

"Since Sunday, when the Iranian delegation returned to Tehran, several messages have been exchanged through Pakistan," said foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei in a weekly press briefing.

EFFORTS ON

- Fresh talks would likely be in Pakistan again as it has emerged as the "only mediator" in the effort to end the US-Israeli war on Iran, says Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt.
- The press secretary further added that these "conversations are productive and ongoing", and that's where "we are right now".
- The war has led Iran to effectively shut the Strait of Hormuz - a vital artery for global crude and gas shipments.

A man rides past a large billboard referring to the Strait of Hormuz in Tehran's Vanak Square on Wednesday. AFP

UN nuclear chief urges strict Iran checks in any deal to end war

SEOUL, AP

The head of the UN's nuclear watchdog said Wednesday that "very detailed" measures to verify Iran's nuclear activities must be included in a potential US-Iran agreement to end their war in the Middle East.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi stressed the need for the thorough verification regime for Iran's nuclear programme, as US President Donald Trump said Tuesday that a second round of talks with Iran could happen over the next two days.

The Trump administration has said that preventing Iran from gaining a nuclear weapon is a key war aim. Iran has previously said it isn't developing such weapons but rejected limits on its nuclear programme.

Last weekend in Pakistan, an initial round of talks between the two countries failed to produce an agreement. The White House said Iran's nuclear ambitions were a central sticking point. But an Iranian diplomatic official, speaking on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the closed-door talks, denied that negotiations had failed over Iran's nuclear ambitions.

"Iran has a very ambitious, wide nuclear programme so all of that will require the presence of IAEA inspectors," Grossi told reporters in Seoul. "Otherwise, you will not have an agreement. You will have an illusion of an agreement."

He said that any agreement on nuclear technology "requires very detailed verification mechanisms."

Iran has not allowed the IAEA access to its nuclear facilities bombed by Israel and the United States during a 12-day war in June, according to a confidential IAEA report circulated to member states and seen by The Associated Press in February.

China has agreed not to provide Iran arms: Trump

CAIRO, AP: President Donald Trump on Wednesday claimed that China has agreed not to provide weapons to Iran as reports circulate that Beijing has considered transferring arms.

Trump wrote in a social media post that China is "very happy that I am permanently opening the Strait of Hormuz." He added: "They have agreed not to send weapons to Iran." He seemed to suggest the two are linked.

The president had told an interviewer on Tuesday that Chinese President Xi Jinping had denied sending weapons to Iran.

Delegation led by Asim Munir reaches Tehran for peace talks

A Pakistani delegation, led by Chief of the Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir, reached Tehran on Wednesday as part of Islamabad's efforts to resolve the conflict between the US and Iran, reports PTI.

The Inter Services Public Relations, the media wing of the military, said in a statement that Munir is part of a delegation that also includes Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi. "Field Marshal Asim Munir... and Mr Mohsin Naqvi, Interior Minister, along with the delegation, arrive at Tehran as part of the ongoing mediation efforts," it said.

Pak PM heads to Saudi, Qatar and Turkey

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif set off on a four-day diplomatic blitz to Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey on Wednesday, his office said, in a feverish round of diplomacy before a possible second round of US-Iran peace talks.

"Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif will undertake official visits to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Qatar and the Republic of Turkiye from 15-18 April 2026," Pakistan's foreign ministry said in a statement, using Turkey's official name.

Trump now posts AI image of himself with Jesus Christ

NEW YORK, REUTERS: US President Donald Trump posted an apparently AI-generated image of Jesus embracing him on Wednesday, two days after he deleted a post that prompted criticism that the Republican president had compared himself to Jesus.

The image, reposted to Trump's Truth Social account, shows Trump with his eyes closed, touching temple-to-temple with a similarly posed Jesus. Trump is standing behind a microphone, and behind him is an American flag. The original post had the caption: "I was never a very religious man .. but doesn't it seem, with all these satanic, demonic, child sacrificing monsters being exposed ... that God might be playing his Trump card!"

Trump's repost added the caption: "The Radical Left Lunatics might not like this, but I think it is quite nice!!!"

US Prez slams Italy's Meloni over lack of support for Iran war

MILAN, AP: Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni was supposed to be Europe's bridge to US President Donald Trump. It may be burning.

After chastising Pope Leo XIV, Trump turned his ire on Meloni, long one of his closest European allies, for calling his papal broadside "unacceptable" and not backing the US-Israel war on Iran.

"I thought she had courage," Trump said in an interview with leading Italian daily Corriere della Sera. "I was wrong."

Meloni has not directly responded to Trump's attacks. But they may be to her advantage as she recovers from a decisive referendum defeat last month and as she seeks to dull the impact of the deeply unpopular Iran war, including higher energy prices.

"I actually think this is a godsend for her," said Nathalie Tocci, a professor at Johns Hopkins SAIS Europe.

Xi says China, Russia should work closely to restore UN authority

Bid to advance the international order in a more just and reasonable direction

BEIJING, PTI

China and Russia should work together to restore the authority of the UN and closely cooperate in BRICS and SCO forums to advance the international order in a more just and reasonable direction, Chinese President Xi Jinping said on Wednesday.

During a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Beijing, President Xi also called on both countries to step up efforts against US President Donald Trump's aggressive unilateral actions.

Xi, who stepped up criticism against Trump for his war on Iran in the last few days, asserting that the world should be prevented from falling back into the law of the jungle, sought more closer cooperation between allies Moscow and Beijing to restore multilateralism and the international rule of law.

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (L), shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping prior to their meeting at the Great Hall of the People, in Beijing, on Wednesday. AP/PTI

"It is necessary to strengthen multilateral cooperation, firmly support and promote multilateralism, jointly work to restore the authority and vitality of the UN and closely coordinate and cooperate within the frameworks of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and BRICS to advance the development of the international order in a more just and reasonable direction," Xi told Lavrov.

In the follow-up to Lavrov's visit to Beijing in the midst of Trump's war against Iran, as well as his virtual takeover of power in Venezuela - an ally of both China and Russia - Moscow and Beijing were expected to step up coordination in UN, where they are permanent members of Security Council.

The two countries were also expected to push BRICS to take a more proactive stand on the restoration of multilateralism and the developmental interests of emerging economies in this year's summit, which is due to be held in India later this year.

Xi, who shares a close friendship with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, said two countries should maintain strategic resolve, trust and support each other, develop jointly and properly fulfil their respective tasks.

Trump threatens to fire Fed chair if he doesn't leave in May

WASHINGTON, AP

President Donald Trump has again threatened to fire Jerome Powell if the Federal Reserve Chair decides to stay on the central bank's governing board after his term as chair expires next month.

"Well then I'll have to fire him, OK?" Trump told Fox Business in an interview that aired Wednesday when reminded that Powell has said he won't leave with an investigation still pending against him.

Powell said he would remain as chair of the Fed's interest rate-setting committee after his term ends if no successor has been confirmed. And he said he could stay even longer if the investigation continues.

Trump has for months wanted to remove Powell as chair of the Fed, saying he has been too slow in orchestrating interest rate cuts that would give the U.S. economy a quick boost.

Trump has nominated former Fed official Kevin Warsh to succeed Powell. Yet Warsh's confirmation has been delayed by a Justice Department investigation into brief comments Powell made before the Senate Banking Committee last June about the Fed's building renovation. Sen. Thom Tillis, a North Carolina Republican, has said he won't vote to confirm any Fed nominees until the investigation is dropped.

US Federal Reserve Board Chairman Jerome Powell (L) and US President Donald Trump. AFP FILE

Three of the Fed's seven governors were appointed by former President Joe Biden; Powell was promoted to the top central bank job by Trump, but has proved himself independent of the president's pressure and threats.

MOST INFLUENTIAL

Sundar Pichai, Ranbir Kapoor join TIME100 list

NEW YORK, PTI

Google CEO Sundar Pichai, Michelin-star chef Vikas Khanna, actor Ranbir Kapoor, YouTube Chief Neal Mohan and New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani have been named among the 100 most influential people in the world by TIME this year.

TIME released its list of the '100 Most Influential People of 2026' Wednesday, a compilation that includes global pioneers, leaders, and titans to artists, innovators, and icons.

The list includes global leaders such as US President Donald Trump, Pope Leo XIV, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Prime Minister of Canada Mark Carney, Chinese President Xi Jinping, and commander of the 2026 Artemis II Reid Wiseman.

Emphasizing that honorees on the list are "changing culture in unprecedented ways," TIME said "that evolution is inspired by the knowledge that influence comes in many forms, as captured in the 2026 TIME100: a character imagined by novelist Tayari Jones; a meal prepared by chef Vikas Khanna; a moment captured by photographer Lynsey Addario, whose work has been featured in TIME since the Afghanistan war."

Student kills 9 in Turkey's second school shooting in 2 days

ANKARA, AP

A student opened fire on two classrooms at a middle school in Turkey on Wednesday, killing nine people and wounding 13 others, the interior minister said, in the country's second such shooting in two days.

The 14-year-old gunman was killed. He arrived at the school armed with guns believed to belong to his father, a retired police officer, Kahramanmaras provincial Gov Mukerrem Unluer said. He was carrying five firearms and seven magazines.

The motive of the attack wasn't immediately known. It was not clear whether the gunman was killed by police or killed himself.

Six of the 13 people wounded were in serious condition, Interior Minister Mustafa Ciftci said.

First aid officers carry a body bag at the scene of a shooting in Kahramanmaras, Turkey, on Wednesday. AFP

The attack came a day after 16 people, mostly students, were wounded when a former student opened fire at a high school in nearby Sanliurfa province. The assailant later killed himself.

Until this week, school shootings were rare in Turkey.

State-run broadcaster, TRT, identified the latest shooter as Isa Aras Mersinli and said his father was detained for questioning.

WORLD AT A GLANCE

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy shakes hands with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni at Chigi Palace, in Rome, Italy, on Wednesday. REUTERS

N Korea boosting ability to make nuclear arms: UN watchdog

North Korea is showing a "very serious increase" in its ability to produce atomic weapons, the head of the UN nuclear watchdog said during a visit to Seoul on Wednesday, reports AFP from Seoul.

Diplomatically isolated North Korea is believed to operate multiple facilities for enriching uranium, a key step in making nuclear warheads, South Korea's spy agency has said.

That includes one at the Yongbyon nuclear site, which Pyongyang purportedly decommissioned after talks but later reactivated in 2021.

"In our periodic assessments, we have been able to confirm that there's a rapid increase in the operations" of the Yongbyon reactor, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Rafael Grossi said in Seoul, where he met South Korea's foreign minister.

The agency also observed a rise in operations at Yongbyon's reprocessing unit and light-water reactor, as well as the activation of other facilities, Grossi told reporters.

"All that points to a very serious increase in the capabilities of (the) DPRK in the area of nuclear weapons production, which is estimated at a few dozen warheads," he said, referring to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the North's official name.

Australia probes Katy Perry

US pop star Katy Perry is under investigation in Australia over allegations of sexual assault made by actor Ruby Rose, police and media said on Wednesday, reports AFP from Sydney.

Katy Perry

Rose alleged in a series of widely reported but now-deleted posts on social media that the singer had assaulted her in a nightclub in Melbourne almost two decades ago.

On Tuesday, Rose -- best known for her role in TV sitcom "Orange is the New Black" -- said she had finalised reports to police and could therefore no longer talk publicly about the case.

In a statement to AFP, Victoria state police declined to name Perry but said they were "investigating a historical sexual assault that occurred in Melbourne in 2010".

"As the investigation remains ongoing, it would be inappropriate to comment further at this stage," a spokesperson added. A representative for Perry denied the claims in a statement to entertainment industry magazine Variety.

"The allegations being circulated on social media by Ruby Rose about Katy Perry are not only categorically false, they are dangerous reckless lies," they said.

4 Indian fishermen held in Lanka

Four Indian fishermen have been arrested, and their trawler seized for allegedly poaching in Sri Lankan waters, the island nation's Navy said on Wednesday, reports PTI from Colombo.

Sri Lanka's North Central Naval Command, in a statement, said it spotted a group of Indian fishing boats engaged in fishing activities in the Sri Lankan waters and deployed personnel to drive them away from the island's waters off Mannar on Monday.

"A compliant boarding made by naval personnel resulted in the seizure of the Indian fishing boat and apprehension of four Indian fishermen who continued to engage in illegal fishing in Sri Lankan waters," the statement said.

So far this year, 18 trawlers and 128 Indian fishermen have been arrested for poaching in Sri Lankan waters, according to the Navy.

A robot from Huibo Robotics is pictured cleaning a desk at the 139th edition of the China Import and Export Fair, also known as the Canton Fair, in Guangzhou in southern China's Guangdong province on Wednesday. AFP

US ends waiver on Russian oil

The United States on Wednesday ruled out granting any further exemption from sanctions for the purchase of Russian or Iranian oil, reports PTI from Washington.

US Treasury Scott Bessent announced at a press conference at the White House here.

"We will not be renewing the general license on Russian oil, and we will not be renewing the general license on Iranian oil. That was oil that was on the water prior to March 11, so all that has been used," Bessent told reporters here.

On March 5, the US issued a 30-day sanctions waiver to India, permitting it to buy Russian oil despite sanctions imposed over the Ukraine war.

A few days later, the US extended the sanctions waiver to a few other nations. The waiver from sanctions expired on April 11.

Biz Bytes

Rupee rises 2 paise to settle at 93.33 against $

MUMBAI, PTI: The rupee rose 2 paise to settle at 93.33 against the US dollar on Wednesday, aided by positive sentiments in the domestic equity markets and hopes of resumption of talks between the US and Iran. US President Donald Trump has said a second round of talks with Iran could be held "over the next two days".

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 93.19 and touched the intraday high of 93.13 against the greenback and a low of 93.44. It finally settled at 93.33, up 2 paise from its previous close.

On Monday, the rupee weakened by 52 paise to settle at 93.35 against the US dollar. The forex market was closed on Tuesday on account of Baba Saheb Ambedkar Jayanti.

Silver surges Rs 11,800, gold jumps Rs 3,000

NEW DELHI, PTI: Silver prices surged by Rs 11,800 to Rs 2.57 lakh per kg while gold advanced by Rs 3,000 to Rs 1.58 lakh per 10 grams in the national capital on Wednesday, driven by fresh buying from jewellers and stockists ahead of Akshaya Tritiya.

Akshaya Tritiya, considered an auspicious day to buy precious metals, will be celebrated on April 19 this year. According to the All India Sarafa Association, the white metal soared by Rs 11,800, or 4.81%, to Rs 2,57,000 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) from Monday's closing level of Rs 2,45,200 per kg.

Gold of 99.9 per cent purity also jumped Rs 3,000, or nearly 2%, to Rs 1,58,000 per 10 gram. The yellow metal had settled at Rs 1.55 lakh per 10 grams in the previous session.

Zoya opens second store in Bengaluru

BENGALURU, DHNS: Zoya, a luxury jewellery brand from the Tata Group, opened its 13th boutique in India and its second in Bengaluru. Amanpreet Ahluwalia, Business Head of Zoya said the company intends to open two to three stores every year and touch a level of 20 stores. It also plans to expand in the overseas markets in the coming years, she said without giving any timeline on it. The second store in Bengaluru is opened at The Leela Palace hotel on old airport road.

UST partners Evaaya to launch GCC solution

BENGALURU, DHNS: UST, a provider of AI and technology transformation solutions, has joined hands with Global Capability Center (GCC) advisory firm Evaaya to launch UST Nimbus, a design-led operating model that enables Global Capability Centers to move beyond execution and become Global Value Organisations. Under UST Nimbus, GCCs are designed from day one to drive innovation, digital transformation, and measurable business outcomes.

The launch of UST Nimbus comes as GCCs (Global Capability Centers) continue to evolve from cost-efficiency models into enterprise innovation hubs, meaning that organizations are under increasing pressure to reduce costs while accelerating innovation and retaining control of talent and intellectual property. This new offering meets these needs by complementing UST's strengths.

Exports, imports fall sharply in March; trade deficit shrinks

West Asia conflict drags down shipments by over 50%

GYANENDRA KESHRI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

India's trade deficit narrowed to $20.67 billion in March from $21.69 billion recorded in the same month last year as the West Asia conflict hit the country's both inbound and outbound shipments, as per official data released on Wednesday.

India's exports fell to $38.92 billion in March from $42.05 billion recorded in the same month last year, posting a decline of 7.44% while imports dropped by 6.51% to $59.59 billion.

For the full year FY26 merchandise exports stood at $441.8 billion, which is 0.9% higher than the previous year.

Imports rose at a faster pace of 7.5% to $775 billion in the year ended March 31. This led to near record increase in trade deficit.

The overall trade deficit for FY26 widened to $119.3 billion from $94.7 billion in the previous year. The highest-ever annual trade deficit was recorded at $121.62 billion in 2022-23.

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said the increase in trade deficit during FY26 was largely due to the surge in gold and silver prices.

The value of gold import jumped to $71.98 billion in FY26 from $58.01 billion in the previous year, recording an increase of 24%; while silver import nearly tripled from $4.83 billion in FY25 to $12.05 billion in FY26.

India's overall exports, merchandise and services combined, rose to $860.09 billion in 2025-26, which is 4.22% higher over the previous year. Overall imports jumped by 6.47% to $979.40 billion.

The US-Israel-Iran conflict, which began on February 28, badly impacted India's shipments to the Gulf region. India's exports to West Asia dipped by 57.95% in March while imports from the region fell 51.64%.

"Crossing $860 billion in exports is a notable achievement, particularly amid global uncertainties, supply chain disruptions, and fluctuating demand. It highlights the adaptability and strength of Indian exporters," said S C Ralhan, President, Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO).

Electronics, engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, petroleum, marine and food products were among the key drivers of India's outbound shipments in 2025-26. Electronics goods export increased by 24.4% followed by a 21.9% surge in meat, dairy, & poultry products during the year.

"The FY26 was marked by geopolitical tensions, a shift in trade policy by the Trump administration, and logistical challenges, among others. The engineering community, while dealing with these issues, also identified new opportunities and went into the market as well as product diversification," said Pankaj Chadha, Chairman, EEPC India.

Engineering goods exports rose by 4.86% to hit an all-time high of $122.43 billion in the financial year 2025-26.

Top 20 countries contributed 67.5% of overall exports and 77.9% of overall imports. China exhibited 36% growth in exports and 16% in imports. Exports to the US remained flat.

Investors' wealth surges by Rs 9.41 lakh crore

BSE Sensex jumps 1,263.67 points or 1.64% to settle at 78,111.24

NEW DELHI, PTI

Investors' wealth surged by Rs 9.41 lakh crore on Wednesday as benchmark indices rebounded sharply amid hopes of renewed diplomatic engagement between the US and Iran.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,263.67 points or 1.64% to settle at 78,111.24. During the day, it zoomed 1,422.85 points or 1.85% to 78,270.42.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies jumped by Rs 9,41,461.6 crore to Rs 4,58,55,016.77 crore ($4.91 trillion).

"Optimism was driven by expectations of renewed US-Iran negotiations, which helped ease concerns around potential oil supply disruptions and triggered a decline in crude prices.

"Market sentiment strengthened further after US President Donald Trump indicated that a second round of discussions could be on the table," according to Bajaj Broking Research.

US President Donald Trump has said that the war with Iran is "close to over," asserting that if he pulled up stakes right now, it would take Tehran 20 years to rebuild the country.

"I think it's close to over, yeah. I view it as very close to being over," Trump told Fox News in an interview that will be telecast later Wednesday.

As per a US media report on Tuesday Trump said that a second round of talks with Iran could be held in Islamabad "over the next two days.

"The primary trigger for today's rally was rising hopes of renewed US–Iran peace talks, with US President Trump signalling negotiations may resume in Pakistan within days. This lifted sentiment globally and eased fears of a prolonged Strait of Hormuz disruption," Gaurav Garg, Analyst, Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

Among the 30-Sensex firms, InterGlobe Aviation, Eternal, Power Grid, Adani Ports, Tech Mahindra and Tata Consultancy Services were the major gainers.

Bharti Airtel and ICICI Bank were the laggards.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading at $95.72 per barrel, up by 0.98%. The BSE SmallCap Select index jumped 2.62% and MidCap Select index climbed 2.55%.

Wholesale price inflation jumps to 3-year high of 3.88% in March

GYANENDRA KESHRI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

India's wholesale price inflation rose to an over three-year high of 3.88% in March, driven by surge in prices of fuel and manufactured products amid supply chain disruptions due to West Asia conflict, as per official data released on Wednesday.

This is the fifth consecutive month of rise in inflation based on the Wholesale Price Index (WPI). It stood at 2.13% in February.

The WPI inflation in primary articles, which include crude petroleum, natural gas, minerals and food articles, surged to 6.36% in March from 3.27% in the previous month. Manufactured products, which has 64.23% weight in the WPI, recorded 3.39% inflation in March against 2.92% recorded in February.

The impact of high global crude price was evident in the primary articles category that nearly doubled to 6.36% with inflation in crude petroleum recorded at 51.57%, unlike deflation in the previous months.

"This reversal in crude inflation trajectory accompanied with the higher weightage assigned to it in the WPI basket, exerted an upward pressure on the headline inflation," said Megha Arora, Director at India Ratings & Research.

Fuel and power recorded a similar trajectory from deflation to inflation on account of higher price of petrol and high-speed diesel. In the manufacturing group, while several sub-groups witnessed inflation, food products, chemicals and textiles exerted upward pressure, Arora said.

The month over month change in WPI for March stood at 1.64%. Fuel and power segment recorded a 4.13% jump in March over the previous month, data released by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry showed.

According to India Ratings & Research, the WPI inflation is likely to increase further to 4.7% in April, due to transmission of high energy prices to the manufacturing sector.

WPI is expected to be higher than the CPI on account of greater weight of fuels in the WPI index. A possible reescalation in West Asia conflict leading to higher price of crude and edible oil, along with currency depreciation will pose the upside risk to inflation. In the medium term, the El Nino effect is expected to increase food prices, IndRa said.

Out of the 22 groups for manufactured products, 16 groups witnessed an increase in prices and 6 groups witnessed a decrease in prices in March over the previous month.

Some of the important groups that showed month-over-month increase in prices were manufacture of food products, chemicals and chemical products, basic metals, textiles and other manufacturing.

Indian trade delegation to visit US next week for talks

NEW DELHI, DHNS: An India delegation will visit Washington next week to resume talks on the India-US bilateral trade agreement, for which the framework was announced in February, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said on Wednesday.

The delegation will be led by India's chief negotiator Darpan Jain, who is a senior IAS officer from Karnataka cadre and currently serving as an additional secretary in the Department of Commerce. The delegation will also include the deputy chief negotiator and other track leads.

According to Agrawal, the chief negotiator-level talks will be held from April 20 to 22.

"Indian team led by chief negotiator will be visiting the US from 20th of this month. The negotiating teams will be meeting in person after a gap of about 3–4 months. They have been engaging virtually in the meantime," Agrawal told reporters.

After multiple rounds of talks, India and the US in February this year released a framework for an interim trade agreement promising to substantially reduce tariffs. Under the interim framework the US has agreed to lower tariffs on the majority of Indian goods from 50% to 18% while India has also agreed to eliminate or reduce tariffs on the majority of American products.

However, the tariff landscape changed after the US Supreme Court struck down Donald Trump administration's so-called reciprocal tariffs.

"We are looking at finalising the legal agreement, which is a logical follow-up of the joint statement released on 7th February," he said.

ICICI Pru Life FY26 PAT grows 34.6%

NEW DELHI, PTI: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Company on Tuesday reported a 34.6% growth in profit after tax to Rs 1,600 crore for 2025-26. The company recorded a net profit of Rs 1,189 crore in 2024-25.

Value of New Business (VNB) increased by 10.9% year-on-year to Rs 2,629 crore with a margin of 24.7%. Its embedded value rose 10.5% year-on-year to Rs 52,989 crore in FY26.

The company, in a statement, said the GST reforms implemented from September 2025 have made insurance policies more affordable, and its retail protection segment registered a strong 50.9 per cent year-on-year in FY26.

The company has proposed a final dividend of Rs 1.65 per share.

TCS incident: It's time for firms to strengthen escalation pathways

UMA KANNAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

After sexual harassment allegations at the Nashik facility of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) rocked the IT industry, social media is witnessing a surge in posts claiming harassment and disrupting work culture in many companies. On Wednesday, IT services firm Tech Mahindra rubbished claims of religious bias after a post on X alleged that the company's office pantry had been declared a 'Footwear-free zone'.

Responding to the allegation, Tech Mahindra spokesperson said that they take such concerns seriously and conducted an internal review, which found these claims to be inaccurate and unfounded.

"We confirm that the image titled 'Footwear Free Zone' is not from any of our offices, and the anonymous post regarding hiring practices is false.

At Tech Mahindra, we are firmly committed to building an inclusive, respectful workplace where every individual is treated with dignity and fairness, without discrimination of any kind, including on the basis of religion. We will continue to review our policies and processes to ensure that our values are upheld consistently, and that no coercive or inappropriate conduct is permitted or carried out in any manner whatsoever," the spokesperson added in the statement.

Following a social media post that alleged misconduct at the Infosys Pune BPM unit, Infosys also stated that it maintains a zero-tolerance approach to any form of harassment or discrimination.

Despite established systems, employees report workplace harassment and misconduct. HR experts said this is a critical moment of introspection for organisations. They must strengthen escalation pathways, ensure independence in investigations and build accountability into the system, they said.

"Preventive vigilance, such as periodic checks, early-warning mechanisms and continuous awareness initiatives, is equally important to ensure issues are identified and addressed before they escalate," Aditya Narayan Mishra, MD and CEO of CIEL HR, said.

According to him, the presence of well-defined policies and grievance mechanisms does not automatically translate into their effective utilisation. Most large organisations today have strong institutional and legal frameworks in place; however, the real gap lies in employee trust and awareness. Many individuals still hesitate to come forward due to fear of retaliation, being singled out, or scepticism about whether their concerns will be handled fairly and confidentially.

Additionally, some behaviours, especially those rooted in personal biases or misuse of authority, may go unnoticed until they escalate. When such issues are not addressed early, they risk becoming normalised within teams. "Employees should be encouraged to escalate concerns through multiple available channels within the organisation, such as whistleblower mechanisms, ethics committees or higher leadership oversight bodies, which are typically designed to function independently of immediate reporting lines. If internal avenues do not result in action, individuals can also seek recourse through external legal and regulatory frameworks, as India has well-established laws addressing workplace harassment, coercion, and discrimination," Mishra said.

RBI gives flexibility to NBFCs for branch expansion

MUMBAI, PTI: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday provided operational flexibility to non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) by allowing them to open branches without prior approval in most cases while imposing certain conditions for deposit taking entities based on net owned funds.

The central bank has issued Reserve Bank of India (Non-Banking Financial Companies – Branch Authorisation) Amendment Directions, 2026.

The objective of these amendment directions is to provide operational flexibility to NBFCs for branch expansion to facilitate ease of doing business while ensuring necessary regulatory compliance, it said in a circular. "An NBFC is generally permitted to open branches without having the need to obtain prior approval from RBI, unless otherwise specifically restricted," RBI said.

The circular further said a deposit-taking NBFC having NOF of up to Rs 50 crore or a credit rating below AA may open a branch or appoint agents within the state where its registered office is situated.

NEW GROWTH WAVE

Data centre market set to touch $22 bn by 2030

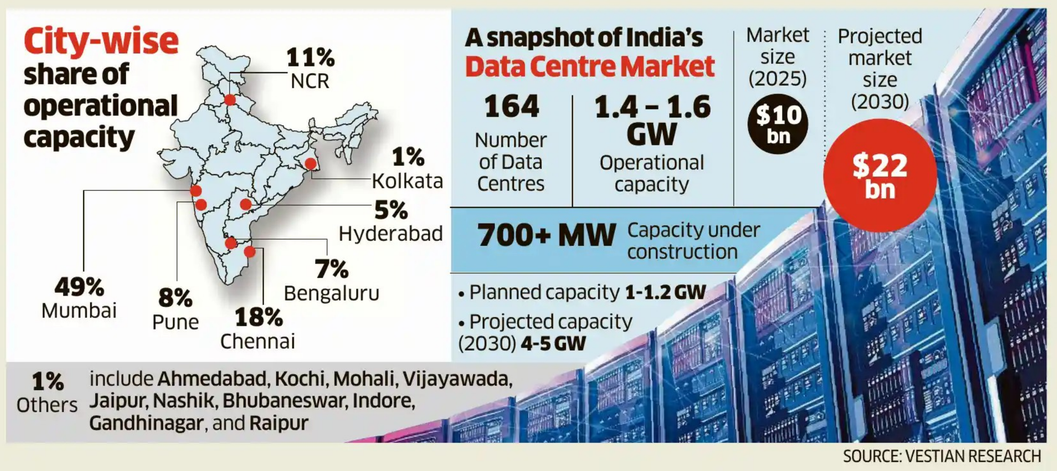
UMA KANNAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

Rising Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption, increasing demand for cloud infrastructure, and the rapid growth of digital platforms are expected to drive the next wave of growth in the country's data centre market, as it is projected to reach $22 billion by 2030 from $10 billion in 2025.

According to Vestian, a workplace solutions firm, installed capacity is expected to expand from around 1.7-2.0 GW by end-2026 to about 4-5 GW by 2030, backed by nearly $30 billion in cumulative investments. It said Mumbai is likely to dominate the market with over half of the country's operational capacity, supported by strong subsea cable connectivity, an established ecosystem, and strong hyperscale interest.

The report also said that Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Pune are expanding as key secondary growth markets. Tier-II cities are also gradually emerging, and operational capacity in these markets is currently estimated at 60–80 MW, and is expected to exceed 100 MW by the end of this year. It mentioned that the data centre sector witnessed robust investments in India, with about $13-15 billion deployed between 2020 and 2024, supported by around 80% participation from foreign institutional investors.

The sector has announced an investment pipeline of nearly $60-70 billion over the next five years, with joint venture-led platforms playing a key role in accelerating hyperscale campus development and capacity expansion across major markets.


City-wise share of operational capacity
11% NCR
1% Kolkata
5% Hyderabad
7% Bengaluru
18% Chennai
8% Pune
49% Mumbai
1% Others include Ahmedabad, Kochi, Mohali, Vijayawada, Jaipur, Nashik, Bhubaneswar, Indore, Gandhinagar, and Raipur
A snapshot of India's Data Centre Market
164 Number of Data Centres
1.4 – 1.6 GW Operational capacity
Market size (2025) $10 bn
Projected market size (2030) $22 bn
700+ MW Capacity under construction
• Planned capacity 1-1.2 GW
• Projected capacity (2030) 4-5 GW

SOURCE: VESTIAN RESEARCH

Shrinivas Rao, CEO, Vestian, said, "India's data centre sector is rapidly transforming on the back of strong policy support and rising digital demand. Despite a limited share of global capacity, India has a huge upside potential to lead in AI infrastructure."

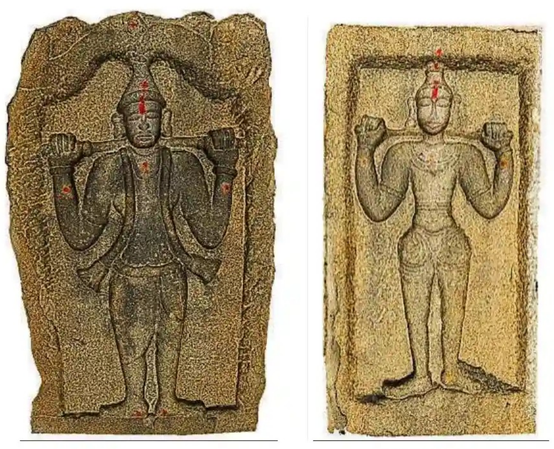
He added that with single-window clearances, 20-year tax exemptions, GST benefits, and incentives extending to 2047, the country is strategically positioned to emerge as a global data centre and AI hub.

The country's data centre market is supported by a diverse mix of global operators, domestic providers, hyperscalers, and telecom companies. Also, there is a massive surge in data centres due to AI.

India hosts around 17-18 international subsea cables with landing stations concentrated in Mumbai, Chennai, Kochi, Tuticorin and Thiruvananthapuram. As global data traffic and cloud adoption accelerate, these highly connected coastal hubs are well-positioned to attract sustained capital inflows and anchor the next phase of data centre investment growth in the country.

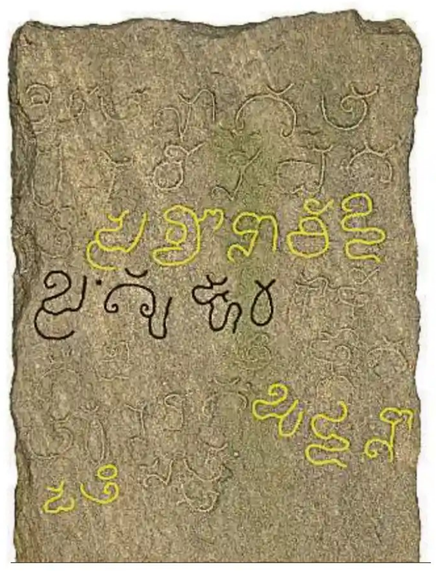
Commitments from OpenAI, Adani Group, Tata Consultancy Services, STT GDC, Larsen & Toubro, NVIDIA, and Sify Technologies across hyperscale, colocation, AI infrastructure, and integrated digital ecosystems will shape the landscape of the country's data centre market.

Udaya Kumar P L explores Bengaluru's hero stones, uncovering stories of valour, sacrifice and lives immortalised within them



The 13th-century Domlur self-sacrifice memorial depicts three figures.

The fragmented 10th-century Hulibete stone at IISc depicts a struggle with a tiger, with only the hero's bow remaining visible.



The 900 CE Begur inscription highlights the names Buttanapatti and Pervvonashetti, and contains the earliest known mention of 'Bengulooru'.

Stories in stone

When you are stuck in a chronic traffic jam on Bengaluru's Hebbal flyover, you are a short walk away from a 1,300-year-old trace of a city that had yet to take shape. Tucked off Ballari Road stands a *mantapa* built in the Ganga dynasty-style of architecture. Inside this temple-like structure is a weathered granite slab etched with two figures: one standing tall with a bow and dagger facing a mounted attacker holding a spear.

This is the 8th-century Hebbal-Kittaya hero stone. It tells the story of an *Ur-alivu*, a terminal attack on a village. It does not celebrate a distant ruler, but a man named Kittaya who stood his ground when his community was under threat. Unlike the grand, impersonal monuments of modern warfare, this stone is deeply personal. It names the fallen hero and marks the exact spot where the person lost his life for the village's survival.

Across Bengaluru, around 80 such recorded ancient hero stones are scattered in plain sight — from the quiet, wooded corner of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) to the temple courtyards of Begur. These *Veeragallus* are reminders of an era when honour and protection of the community were central values.

At first glance, these stones may merely seem like decorative carvings. But for a history enthusiast they are storyboards. Usually divided into three panels, the bottom of the stone slabs captures battle scenes. The middle panel shows celestial nymphs (*apsaras*) carrying the hero towards heaven and the top depicts the hero in eternal peace before a deity. Some hero stones with inscriptions offer rare details about the lives of Bengaluru's early residents.

But what were these heroes defending? Often, it was the village's livelihood. In a pastoral society, cattle were the primary form of wealth; a raid was an economic strike. Many of Bengaluru's hero stones are Turugol (cattle-rescue) stones.

The Begur Turugol Veera records the death of Bydukura Kerega in the 10th century during a fierce struggle to reclaim stolen livestock. Similarly, a stone from Dodda Toggur (now in a JP Nagar residence) shows us that South Bengaluru's suburbs were once high-stakes grazing grounds where such conflicts were common.

Bengaluru's 'birth certificate'

The most well-known of these memorials sits at the Begur Panchalingeshwara temple complex. This 900 CE hero stone commemorates Buttanapatti, son of the chieftain Nagattara, and his adopted son Pervvonashetti, who fell in the 'Battle of Bengaluru'. This hero stone is, in a way, the city's biography, containing the earliest known mention of the name 'Bengaluru' (recorded as 'Bengulooru'), proving the name we mutter today has echoed across these ridges for over eleven centuries.

Conflict didn't always come from human raiders. The 10th century IISc Hulibete Veera takes us back to a landscape of forests and apex predators. It depicts a hero (now no longer visible, as the stone is fragmented) in a fatal struggle with a tiger during a *hulibete* (tiger hunt). A similar stone in Madivala, near BTM Layout, serves as a reminder that these modern residential hubs were once the literal edge of the wild.

These stones were not just about grief; they were social contracts too. When a hero fell, local rulers often granted *Kodige* (also called Kalnad), a tax-free land, to the family. Sacrifice was remembered through the material security of those left behind.

Some stones also capture intense spiritual devotion, like the 13th-century Domlur stone that commemorates three individuals who offered their lives in *atma balidana* (self-sacrifice). Their carved figures are preserved in stone, facing the Domlur Chokkanatha temple. Nearby in Dodda Nekkundi, a 10th-century Mahasati stone records a woman who committed Sati, a sombre record of the era's social expectations.

Reflecting on the record

These memorials tend to cluster in the 9th-10th and 13th-15th centuries — periods of intense social change. Even specific acts of bravery are etched here. For instance, the 15th-century stone of Kodikara Bommu from Madhure (near Hesaraghatta) shows a pilgrim returning from Tirupati who took down the bandits attacking him before he finally fell.

Today, we walk past these granite slabs without a second glance. Yet, they are the most authentic records of the people who laid the foundation of Bengaluru city. The Hebbal-Kittaya stone does not speak of distant rulers, it speaks of a citizen who stood his ground. In a city constantly reinventing itself, these hero stones remain grounded, reminding us that our history is etched into the very stones of the streets we walk.

(The author is the Honorary Project Director, the Bengaluru Inscriptions 3D Digital Conservation project, the Mythic Society)

The 8th-century Hebbal-Kittaya stone, depicting a hero's final stand during a village attack, is preserved in a traditional Ganga-style mantapa off Ballari Road in Bengaluru.
PHOTOS BY AUTHOR

FEEDBACK
Send your ideas and comments to: spectrum@deccanherald.co.in

Visit **bit.ly/herostonesblr** to explore an **interactive Hero Stone map** developed by the Mythic Society's Bengaluru Inscriptions Digital Conservation Project

An edible Sangeet in Kittur

Pradeep Melinmani traces the story of a beloved snack and the origin of its curious name

In the historical town of Channamma Kittur in Belagavi district, Sangeet, which literally means music in Kannada, isn't just something one listens to. It is something one can eat. Spicy, crunchy and purely local, this snack carries a story as unique as its flavour.

Step into any small eatery in Kittur and ask what's on the menu. The answer often comes back instantly: *Sangeet ithiri* (we have Sangeet) as the humble snack has become an integral part of the region's identity in Channamma's Kittur.

And it's not just Kittur. Across several towns and villages in Belagavi and Dharwad districts, Sangeet is a sought-after snack in local eateries. Like *mirchi bhajji*, *misal*, *churumuri*, *girmit* or *pav bhaji*, Sangeet has become a go-to evening snack.

If classical music is composed of *shruti*, *raga*, *laya*, *tala* and *swara*, this edible Sangeet has its own ensemble of puffed rice, bits of *bhajji*, spicy mixtures, peanuts, flattened rice, salt, chopped onions, fried green chillies and grated coconut, all coming together in a mouth-watering blend of flavours. And as just the spicy flavours tingle on the tongue, a strong cup of tea feels like the perfect companion.

During these sessions, 'Inamdar sir' would often ask a student to go to a nearby hotel and get *churumuri* (puffed rice) topped with *khara* (a spicy, crunchy mixture), peanuts, pieces of *bhajji* and chopped onions, followed by tea.

"The students would relay the order with the customised ingredients faithfully at the hotel, often adding that it was for 'Inamdar sir'. Accepting the order, the hotel manager would ask his staff to send a parcel to the 'Sangeet (music) meet-up spot'. Over time, those words shortened to a simple call: *Sangeet kodri* (give them Sangeet)," recalls veteran Hindustani vocalist Sandeep Deshpande.

What's in a name?

The story behind Sangeet goes back a few decades, rooted in Kittur's musical and cultural life.

For generations, the rulers of Kittur were guided by the spiritual heads of the Rajaguru Sansthan's Kalmath. Even today, the *samadhis* of many Kittur rulers lie within its premises, each marked by shrine-like structures known locally as *kalgudi*.

Some four to five decades ago, one such *kalgudi* would come alive every evening with Hindustani classical music sessions led by Pandit Baburao Inamdar, a respected musician and teacher at Gurusiddheshwar High School. Students would gather around him to learn and practice.

As years passed, this customised mix grew popular across towns and villages in the region, eventually becoming known simply as Sangeet.

Kittur's rulers were known patrons of music, and even after the princely state faded, the seers of Kalmath continued to support musicians. In recent decades, noted artistes such as Narasimha Shiggavi, Baburao Inamdar, Ranganna Mosali and others nurtured the town's rich musical culture. They are no longer with us, but what they left behind endures in two forms: the Sangeet that lingers in memory, and the Sangeet that continues to delight as a snack.

People enjoy Sangeet, a go-to evening snack, in Channamma Kittur.
PHOTOS BY AUTHOR

Ishwana: A seasonal culinary delight on the Arabian Sea coast

Beeranna Nayak Mogata explores how the arrival of this prized fish from October to May revives fish markets, seafood cuisine and the livelihoods of fisher community in Uttara Kannada

On a Sunday morning, as I made my way towards the fish market in Uttara Kannada's Gokarna, the sea-scented air greeted me first. Within moments of reaching there, the calm gave way to a rising chorus: fishermen chattering about their catch, buyers negotiating and baskets of fish changing hands. But cutting through the noise, a common name that echoed across the market was 'Ishwana'.

From October to May, Uttara Kannada coast sees an abundant arrival of Ishwana, known in English as seer fish. During this period, fish markets become noticeably crowded, as Ishwana is widely regarded as the king of coastal flavours. Locally, it is called Surmai or simply referred to as the "big fish" due to its impressive length of around 80 cm. Belonging to the mackerel family, it is a rich source of protein, omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins, and minerals.

The arrival of Ishwana from the sea boosted the mood of the Gokarna fish market instantly. A sense of enthusiasm took over. Fish lovers had waited for the Ishwana season with quiet eagerness much like a farmer waiting for the rain, and the bounty had finally arrived. Equally happy, fishers and sellers saw Ishwana as a crowd-puller.

Along the Arabian Sea coast of Karnataka, October is not just another month on the calendar. It signals a shift in the mood of the sea. Cool winds and a light mist along the shore serve as cues for the fisher community: the Ishwana season has begun.

Locals identify two types of Ishwana: *Hennu Ishwana* (female) and *Dandi Ishwana* (male). Only experienced buyers can distinguish between a male and a female by just looking at its head. A female usually weighs up to five kilograms, while a male can grow up to 25 kilograms. Many prefer the female for its richer taste.

During the season, Ishwana is priced between Rs 600 and Rs 700 per kilogram. In some markets, it is sold in pieces, with price per piece ranging from Rs 80 to Rs 400 depending on size and demand. Restaurants compete to source it, as Ishwana fry remains popular through the season.

Unlike many fish that contain numerous small bones and are tricky to eat, Ishwana has a single large central bone. This makes it easier to prepare and eat. However, Ishwana is not easy to dry and preserve. Its flavour and aroma are best experienced fresh.

Inviting aroma

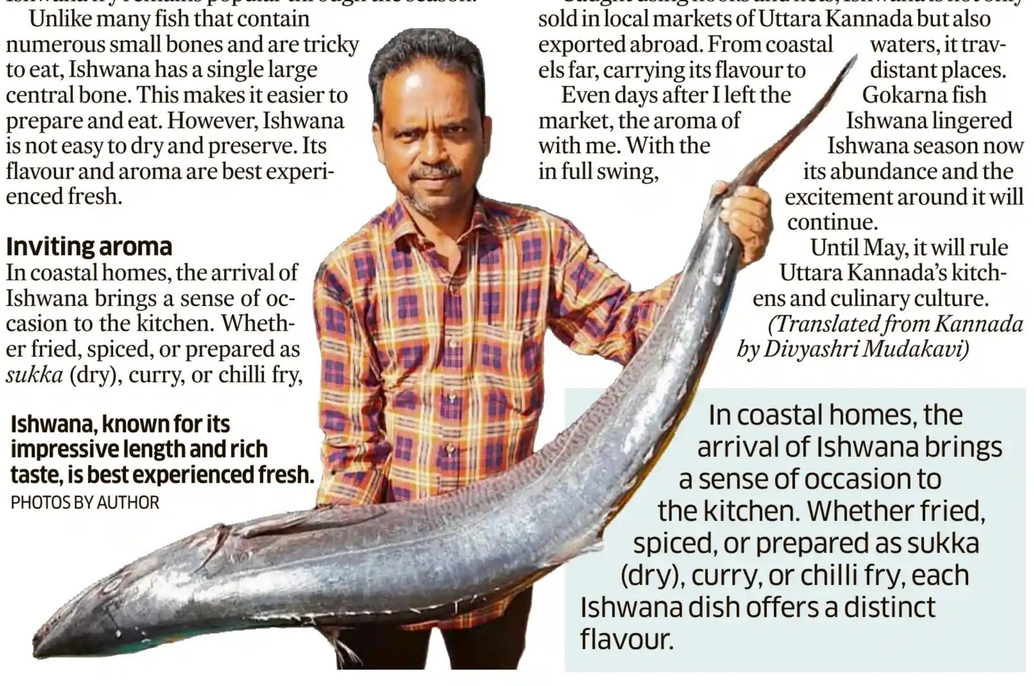
In coastal homes, the arrival of Ishwana brings a sense of occasion to the kitchen. Whether fried, spiced, or prepared as *sukka* (dry), curry, or chilli fry, each Ishwana dish offers a distinct flavour. A piece of Ishwana coated in *masala* and fried in coconut oil releases an inviting aroma, setting the tone for a special meal.

Caught using hooks and nets, Ishwana is not only sold in local markets of Uttara Kannada but also exported abroad. From coastal waters, it travels far, carrying its flavour to distant places.

Even days after I left the Gokarna fish market, the aroma of Ishwana lingered with me. With the Ishwana season now in full swing, its abundance and the excitement around it will continue.

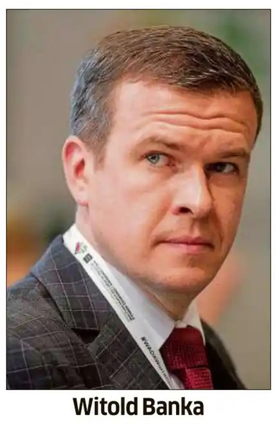
Until May, it will rule Uttara Kannada's kitchens and culinary culture.

(Translated from Kannada by Divyashri Mudakavi)



Ishwana, known for its impressive length and rich taste, is best experienced fresh.
PHOTOS BY AUTHOR

In coastal homes, the arrival of Ishwana brings a sense of occasion to the kitchen. Whether fried, spiced, or prepared as sukka (dry), curry, or chilli fry, each Ishwana dish offers a distinct flavour.



Witold Banka

WADA chief discusses dope control with sports minister

NEW DELHI, PTI: World Anti-Doping Agency President Witold Banka, who is on a whirlwind tour of India, met Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya here on Wednesday to discuss "effective implementation" of anti-doping measures in the country in line with global standards.

Banka had met National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) officials on Monday for "urgent and serious" discussions on protecting the "integrity of sport" in India. He is scheduled to hold a press conference in Delhi on Thursday in which he is expected to address India's poor doping numbers.

"Had an excellent meeting with Mr. Witold Ba ka, President of the World Anti-Doping Agency in New Delhi today. Under the leadership of PM Shri @narendramodi ji, India is committed to fostering a strong culture of clean sport, where the true spirit of competition is safeguarded," Mandaviya posted on 'X'.

Banka said the meeting focussed on continued progress in anti-doping efforts.

"Pleased to meet with Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya, Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports and Minister of Labour and Employment of India. We discussed advancing anti-doping efforts and strengthening the integrity of sport in India, including the importance of sustained progress and effective implementation in line with global standards," he posted.

Earlier in the day Banka had a meeting with CBI special director Manoj Sashidhar to deliberate on increased cooperation to tackle criminal networks engaged in sale of banned substances.

Kapishraj shines for Max Muller

BENGALURU, DHNS: Kapishraj scored a half-century as Max Muller trounced Panthers by nine wickets in the Tiger Cup under-14 cricket tournament at the JSS Academy for Technical Education ground here on Wednesday.

LOCAL CRICKET

After dismissing Panthers for an exact 100 in 29.1 overs, Max Muller coasted home in 14.5 overs, thanks to Kapishraj's 53.

Brief scores: Panthers: 100 all out in 29.1 overs (Sachin T 57) lt to Max Muller: 101/1 in 14.5 overs (Kapishraj 53, Pratham S Kulkarni 37).

CBT: 169/7 in 30 overs (Partha BN 82, Aarav 38) lt to Kreeda Kshetra: 172/6 in 21.3 overs (Ojas Jha 47).

Bootcamp: 102 all out in 21.2 overs (Nairith Mandeep 34) lt to Cricket Arena: 106/5 in 24.4 overs (Haynes 24).

SCA: 218/2 in 30 overs (Farhan Shaikh 79, Tamser Ngurang 63, Samar Modhe 58) bt Gopalan: 134 all out in 26.5 overs.

◆ ON TV ◆

CRICKET

IPL: Mumbai Indians vs Punjab Kings (**7:30 pm**). **LIVE** on **Star Sports Network, JioHotstar.**

FOOTBALL

Europa League (Quarterfinals Leg-2): Celta vs Freiburg (**10:15 pm**), Real Batis vs Braga, Nottingham Forest vs Porto, Aston Villa vs Bologna (**all 12:30 am, Friday**). **LIVE** on **Sony Sports Network, SonyLIV.**

ISL: East Bengal FC vs Bengaluru FC (**7:30 pm**). **LIVE** on **Sony Sports Network, FanCode.**

TENNIS

ATP 500 Barcelona Open: Quarterfinal (**5:30 pm**). **LIVE** on **FanCode.**

Vaishali tops Candidates for a shot at world title

Indian GM beats Russia's Lagno in a must-win game on the final day

PAPHOS (CYPRUS), PTI

Grandmaster R Vaishali held her nerve in the final round to defeat Russia's Kateryna Lagno and clinch the Women's Candidates Tournament title, which concluded here on Wednesday.

In a tightly contested race that went down to the last day, Vaishali delivered when it mattered most, converting her chances in a must-win game to finish as the outright winner.

The victory takes Vaishali to 8.5 points and secures her a place in the World Championship match later this year, where she will face China's Ju Wenjun. The result marks her arrival at the biggest stage in women's chess, after years of competing alongside the top names in the circuit.

Often mentioned alongside her younger brother R Praggnanandhaa, Vaishali now has a major title of her own, achieved through a consistent run across the tournament. She stayed within touching distance of the lead through the middle rounds and timed her push well in the closing stages to move ahead of the field.

Her final round game against Lagno carried significant weight, with the standings still open. Vaishali managed the position carefully out of the opening and gradually built pressure before capitalising on a mistake to take control. From there, she converted the advantage without allowing complications, ensuring it was decided in her favour.

R Vaishali won the Candidates tournament to book her spot in the World Championship match where she will take on China's Ju Wenjun later this year. FILE PHOTO

With this win, Vaishali becomes the second Indian woman after Koneru Humpy to claim the Candidates title, continuing India's strong presence in elite women's chess events.

In the Open section, Uzbekistan's Javokhir Sindarov ed his campaign with a draw against China's Wei Yi, confirming his place as the challenger to reigning world champion D Gukesh. Sindarov had already secured the title with a round to spare and closed out the tournament without taking unnecessary risks.

India's R Praggnanandhaa ended his campaign with a draw against Hikaru Nakamura. The Indian Grandmaster had a mixed tournament and finished outside the leading group after struggling to convert key positions into wins.

Anish Giri finished second, 1.5 points behind Sindarov, after defeating Germany's Matthias Bluebaum in the final round. Fabiano Caruana also ended on a winning note, beating Andrey Esipenko to improve his final standing.

Results (Round 14): R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 6) drew with Hikaru Nakamura (USA 6.5); Andrey Esipenko (Rus, 4.5) lt to Fabiano Caruana (USA, 7); Matthias Bluebaum (Ger, 5.5) lt to Anish Giri Ned, 8); Javokhir Sindarov (Uzb, 9.5) drew with Wei Yi (Chn, 6).

Women: R Vaishali (Ind, 8.5) bt Kateryna Lagno (Rus, 6.5); Bibisara Assuabayeva (Kaz, 8) drew with Divya Deshmukh (Ind, 6); Anna Muzychuk (Ukr, 6.5) playing Zhu Jiner (Chn, 7); Tan Zhongyi (Chn, 5.5) playing Aleksandra Goryachkina (Rus, 6.5).

Lorenzo Musetti. FILE PHOTO

Alcaraz eases past qualifier Virtanen

BARCELONA, AFP: World No. 2 Carlos Alcaraz eased to a 6-4, 6-2 victory over Finnish qualifier Otto Virtanen on Tuesday to begin his push for a third Barcelona Open title.

The Spaniard, who lost the Monte Carlo Masters final to new No. 1 Jannik Sinner on Sunday, can reclaim top spot if he triumphs this week in Barcelona, as he did in 2022 and 2023.

Alcaraz, who finished as runner-up last year in Catalonia, started the first round clash slowly but found his rhythm in a dominant second set.

"I didn't have much time to adjust in terms of training -- this morning was the first practice session I'd done here in Barcelona, which makes it a bit hard to find good sensations at the start," said Alcaraz afterwards.

"I'm happy to have come through the problems I had in the first set."

Alcaraz received some treatment from the physio on his forearm but said he hoped it was "nothing" and without time to rest between tournaments that it was normal to have "little niggles".

The seven-time Grand Slam winner will face Czech Tomas Machac in the second round.

Earlier on, second seed Lorenzo Musetti defeated Martin Landaluce 7-5, 6-2 for his first win since the Australian Open.

Australian Alex de Minaur overcame Sebastian Ofner 7-6 (9/7), 6-4, while Karen Khachanov suffered a surprise 6-3, 6-4 defeat by Camilo Ugo Carabelli.

Fifth seed Andrey Rublev saw off Mariano Navone in straight sets and Arthur Fils outlasted Terence Atmane 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (9/7).

FOOTBALL CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Atletico survive a scare

Simeone's side defies 10-man Barcelona; holders PSG slay Liverpool

MADRID, AFP

Atletico Madrid sent 10-man Barcelona crashing out of the Champions League and reached the final four with a 3-2 aggregate victory despite Tuesday's 2-1 quarterfinal second leg defeat.

Lamine Yamal and Ferran Torres fired visitors Barca ahead inside 24 minutes but Ademola Lookman's strike gave Atletico the edge in the gripping all-Spanish tie once again after their 2-0 win in the first leg.

Diego Simeone's side returned to the semifinals for the first time since 2017 by holding on against the La Liga champions in a compelling and bloody battle.

Barcelona ended the game with 10-men as Eric Garcia was sent off for bringing down Alexander Sorloth as he ran in on goal, hampering their chance of finding a third goal to force extra-time.

Atletico, who have never won the competition and lost the 2014 and 2016 finals with Simeone at the helm, will face Arsenal or Sporting Lisbon in the semifinals.

Barca coach Hansi Flick benched forwards Marcus Rashford and Robert Lewandowski for workhorses Torres and Gavi, looking to press Atletico relentlessly in the sixth match between these sides this season.

Ademola Lookman (left) scores Atletico Madrid's opening goal against Barcelona during their Champions League quarterfinal second leg clash on Tuesday. REUTERS

Goalkeeper Juan Musso tipped a Yamal effort around his post after just 32 seconds, with Barca roaring out of the blocks in a fiery atmosphere at the Metropolitano stadium.

The teenage winger fired the visitors ahead after just four minutes when he harried Clement Lenglet into giving the ball away.

Torres nudged it back to Yamal who slipped a low shot through Musso's legs to hush the home fans and ignite Barca's attempted comeback bid.

Dani Olmo nearly grabbed a second but Musso was able to reach his attempted lob as Barca continued to dominate.

Antoine Griezmann had a shot deflected wide as Atletico showed occasional flashes, mostly through enterprising winger Lookman, who gave Jules Kounde a difficult night.

Barcelona doubled their lead in the 24th minute to level the tie on aggregate when Torres left Lenglet trailing, reached Olmo's pass and fired across Musso into the top corner.

Fermin Lopez could have notched Barca's third but Musso clawed out his header and left the midfielder bleeding after his boot caught the Spaniard in the face.

Atletico pulled their way back into the game in the 31st minute after Barca switched off defensively for the first time.

Marcos Llorente charged in down the right behind the Catalans' high defensive line and crossed for Lookman to convert.

Double for Dembele

Ousmane Dembele's double guided Paris Saint-Germain into the semifinals as a 2-0 win over Liverpool at Anfield on Tuesday completed a 4-0 aggregate win for the holders.

To compound the English champions' woes, Hugo Ekitike suffered a serious-looking injury that could end his season and hinder Liverpool's chances of being back among Europe's elite next season.

Akshunna brace seals victory for FC Bengaluru United

BENGALURU, DHNS: FC Bengaluru United bagged their first match of the I-League 2 season as a first-half brace from their striker Akshunna Tyagi saw the hosts beat Manipur's NEROCA FC 2-1 at the Dravid Padukone CoE here on Wednesday.

Tyagi opened the scoring from a glancing header at the 22nd minute following a well-kept corner kick by Allen Lyngdoh. His second goal came from the spot at the 35th minute after NEROCA's winger Khanngam Horam fouled Ashley Alban Koli inside the box following a set-piece.

Former I-League 2 champions tried to get back into the game but missed three clear-cut chances, including two to the woodworks but at the end had to be content with consolatory goal through Phijam Sanathoi Meetei late in the added time (90+7th).

Akshunna Tyagi. FCBU

FCBU (five points in three matches) moved to fifth spot with the victory behind SC Bengaluru, who are ahead on goal difference. Both teams are two points behind table toppers United SC while NEROCA are dead last with just a point in four matches.

Result: FCBU: 2 (Akshunna Tyagi 22nd, 35th) bt NEROCA: 1 (Phijam Sanathoi Meetei 90+7th).

STAR ON THE RISE

Ayush Shetty, silver medallist at the Badminton Asia Championships, poses during the felicitation ceremony held by the Karnataka Badminton Association in Bengaluru on Wednesday. DH PHOTO/PUSHKAR V

Italy to host a Wimbledon tune-up starting 2028

ROME, AP: The ATP Finals. The Davis Cup Finals. And now a Wimbledon tune-up on grass courts that could be played on the football pitch inside Milan's San Siro stadium.

Led by top-ranked Jannik Sinner, who won Wimbledon last year, the Italian tennis movement keeps on adding new events.

The Italian Tennis and Padel Federation has purchased the rights for a 250-level ATP Tour tournament in Brussels that is held in October, federation president Angelo Binaghi announced Tuesday.

The event will be held each June starting in 2028.

"There's still time to decide where to play it," Binaghi said. "For climate reasons, it will probably be held in northern Italy."

Binaghi noted that the Madrid Open is introducing practice courts inside Real Madrid's Santiago Bernabeu stadium, so the San Siro could be an option: "For once, we wouldn't be the first to do it."

Italy previously hosted a WTA tournament on grass in Gaiba from 2022-24. The federation is also hosting the ATP Finals, currently in Turin, through 2030 and the Davis Cup Finals in Bologna through next year.

Meanwhile, the federation is preparing to host the Italian Open next month.

After Sinner beat Carlos Alcaraz in the Monte Carlo Masters final on Sunday, organisers are optimistic that he could become the first Italian man to claim the singles title at the Foro Italico since Adriano Panatta 50 years ago.

BFC face tough EB test

ADITYA K HALDER
BENGALURU, DHNS

It's often said in football that if you want to be league champions, win your matches at home with the fans backing you and try not to lose away. This, however, hasn't been the case for Bengaluru FC in the ongoing Indian Super League season.

The Blues, who are still adjusting to their new Spanish coach Pep Munoz, have won just one of their five matches at home. However, they have won all three of their away matches, including an impressive 2-0 defeat of FC Goa in Fatorda.

On Thursday, the Sunil Chhetri-led side will be on the road once again and this time the test only gets tougher as they face fellow title contenders East Bengal at the 'mecca of Indian football' Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata.

Tied on 14 points each and four points off the top with just five rounds left, neither of the football powerhouses would like to lose any further ground in the title run. BFC will be further looking to bank on the point that they are visiting Kolkata for the third time since the beginning of March and have scored five goals in the two outings before.

The Bengaluru club received a further boost as their in-form Argentine midfielder Braian Sanchez saw his red-card suspension overturned by AIFF's disciplinary committee following a complaint by the club.

Suresh Singh Wangjam. BFC

Saying that, East Bengal have been at a different level compared to their rivals earlier and have fired 10 goals in their last two matches, including 7-0 thrashing of bottom-placed Mohammedan Sporting. The Oscar Bruzon-led side has star domestic performers in Anwar Ali, Bipin Singh, Jeakson Singh, among others, while Moroccan striker Youssef Ezzejjari has been a decisive factor with seven goals in as many games.

"We are on the same points, but it's still a tough game, as we play away. They have a good number of foreigners and quality Indian players. They are an offensive team that scores in most of the games," said Munoz.

Injury-hit Danish great Axelsen calls time on a stellar career

NEW DELHI, PTI

Two-time Olympic and world champion Danish badminton great Viktor Axelsen announced his retirement on Wednesday, saying that his injury-ravaged body has told him to "stop".

The 32-year-old has not competed since October last year due to a back problem which had needed surgery and left him in chronic pain.

"As most people know, I have been struggling with my back for quite some time. After I had surgery in April last year and went through a long rehabilitation process, I unfortunately had a setback in October," Axelsen, a three-time European champion, told 'Badminton Europe'.

"Since those tournaments, I have not been able to play or train at the level required. I have not been able to play or train due to pain, and that is why I am unfortunately forced to make this extremely difficult decision," he said.

Axelsen, who held the world No. 1 position for 183 weeks which is the third longest run of all time, said that with the pain not subsiding and doctors warning him of another surgery if he continued, he finally had to listen to his body.

The affable Dane, who has managed asthma throughout his career, won consecutive gold medals at the Tokyo and Paris Olympics and finished on top in the 2017 and 2022 World Championships. He was also a part six gold-winning Danish teams in the European Championships.

"The decision has been made in consultation with the surgeon who operated on me last year, as well as the doctors I have been working with," he said.

"They say that with the pain I am experiencing now, it could potentially require another surgery, and if that does not go well, even a more serious procedure might be necessary.

"In any case, it would mean I would not be able to compete at the level required. So, it is simply my body telling me to stop, and I have to follow the advice of my doctors," added the celebrated shuttler whose last competitive outing was the Denmark Open in October 2025.

Despite the painful circumstances of his retirement, Axelsen said he would look back at his career with joy.

"Making this decision has been extremely difficult and at times felt unfair. At the same time, my body has done an incredible job over many years."

With two Olympic gold, two World Championship titles and 183 weeks as world No. 1, Denmark's Viktor Axelsen is considered one of the greats of the game. AFP

Sen's tribute to Axelsen

Indian shuttler Lakshya Sen penned an emotional tribute to two-time Olympic champion Viktor Axelsen following his retirement announcement, saying badminton will remember him as "one of the greatest to ever play the game", reports PTI from New Delhi.

Widely regarded as one of the modern greats of the game, Axelsen announced his retirement on Wednesday, saying ongoing back problems have made it difficult for him to compete at the highest level.

The 32-year-old Dane won consecutive gold medals at the Tokyo and Paris Olympics and finished on top in the 2017 and 2022 World Championships. He was also a part of six gold-winning Danish teams in the European Championships.

"Badminton is blessed to have you and it will remember you as one of the greatest to ever play the game," Sen posted on his Instagram story.

10 TEAMS 13 VENUES 58 DAYS 74 MATCHES

"I've watched a few of these young Indian boys, the way they've gone about the Powerplay, I sat in my room and gone 'gee, we need to go pretty hard here'.

MITCHELL MARSH, LSG

RCB rout LSG to go top of table

Batters complete job after bowlers' dominant show

VIGNESH BHARADWAJ
BENGALURU, DHNS

Just like how it hogged all the spotlight in most of their games this season, the Lucknow Super Giants' batting inefficiencies were exposed again as Rishabh Pant's men were brought to their knees at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium here by Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Wednesday night.

RCB quicks exploited the early favourable conditions to keep LSG hushed as Bhuvneshwar Kumar (3/27), Rasikh Dar (4/24) and Josh Hazlewood (1/20) dismantled the visiting batters with their bag of tricks. Once LSG were bundled out cheaply for a below-par 146 all out in 20 overs, any thoughts of a comeback were straight away banished by the turbocharged RCB in the first six overs.

Impact Player Virat Kohli's visual batting treat joined hands with Rajat Patidar's (27 off 13) new-found six-hitting temptation and the finishing touches were laid by Jitesh Sharma (23 off 9) as RCB registered a five-wicket win with 4.5 overs to spare.

With the third consecutive victory at home and fourth of the season, RCB now jump to the top of the table with eight points from five games and a healthy net run-rate of 1.503.

While the Super Giants scored at just 5.83 runs per over in their first six, the Challengers went about business at 10 an over, underlining the average batting display of the visitors.

Kohli, who only batted for a brief period on the eve of the game with a strap on his ankle, batted for 48 minutes while making a velvet-smooth 49.

Phil Salt (7) and Devdutt Padikkal (10) endured rare batting failures. Once Kohli walked back, Patidar and Jitesh bludgeoned their way to a quick-fire 35 off 13 balls partnership in just nine minutes.

It was a massive task for a listless LSG to defend such a total. While they did fight back in pockets by picking up the wickets of Patidar and Jitesh, they could only delay the inevitable.

Earlier, the Chinnaswamy surface once again showed it has something in it for the quicks in its early hours of play. On Wednesday, it offered a spongy bounce around the good length area.

Exploiting the conditions, Bhuvneshwar and Hazlewood kept deliveries wide and full outside the off-stump and bowled under the feet, not handing any freebies while Rasikh bowled slower bouncers and yorkers.

Skipper Rishabh Pant (1) endured a bizarre 12-minute stay where he tried to smash Hazlewood into the stands in his first ball and completely missed it. He attempted another swing across but was hit on his left elbow.

Once the physio applied the magic spray, Pant walked back with his head bowed and with a grimace. He did return to bat later on in the innings, but failed to do any harm.

Nicholas Pooran (1) endured another batting failure. The 30-year-old now has not crossed 19 in his last eight innings and his performances cast a shadow over his inclusion in the XI, with the talented Matthew Breetzke on the bench.

The Australian T20 skipper Mitchell Marsh (40) started off slow but just when he found his range, he was castled by the Krunal Pandya (2/38).

On the other hand, Ayush Badoni (38) discovered some confidence while wickets tumbled at the other end and consequently the shots flowed all over the park.

The 21-year-old Mukul Choudhary (39), known for his range-hitting, played a more cautious role and added a 35-run partnership with Badoni to take LSG to 112/4 in 15 overs.

Bhuvneshwar and Rasikh picked up two wickets each in the 19th and 20th overs to cap off a brilliant bowling display.

RCB pacers choked LSG batting as Rasikh Dar (left) took a four-for while Josh Hazelwood was adjudged Player of the Match for his figures of 1/20 at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru on Wednesday. DH PHOTOS/ PRASHANTH HG

SCOREBOARD

LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS: Mitchell Marsh b Krunal 40 (32b, 3x4, 2x6), Aiden Markram c Padikkal b Rasikh 12 (8b, 1x6), Rishabh Pant c Salt b Bhuvneshwar 1 (6b), Nicholas Pooran b Hazlewood 1 (7b), Ayush Badoni c Jitesh b Rasikh 38 (24b, 4x4, 1x6), Abdul Samad c Patidar b Krunal 0 (2b), Mukul Choudhary b Rasikh 39 (28b, 3x4, 2x6), George Linde c David b Bhuvneshwar 7 (7b, 1x4), Mohammed Shami b Bhuvneshwar 0 (1b), Avesh Khan b Rasikh 1(2b), Digvesh Rathi (not out) 0 (3b). Extras (W-4, LB-2, B-1) 7. **TOTAL (all out, 20 overs) 146.**

Fall of wickets: 1-32 (Markram), 2-35 (Pooran), 3-71 (Marsh), 4-83 (Samad), 5-118 (Badoni), 6-124 (Pant), 7-137 (Linde), 8-137 (Shami), 9-145 (Mukul).

Bowling: Bhuvneshwar Kumar 4-0-27-3, Josh Hazlewood 4-0-20-1, Rasikh Dar 4-0-24-4, Krunal Pandya 4-0-38-2, Suyash Sharma 4-0-34-0.

ROYAL CHALLENGERS BENGALURU: Phil Salt b Prince 7 (8b, 1x4), Virat Kohli c Pooran b Avesh 49 (34b, 6x4, 1x6), Devdutt Padikkal c Himmat b Avesh 10 (11b, 1x4), Rajat Patidar c Rathi b Prince 27 (13b, 1x4, 3x6), Jitesh Sharma c Choudhary b Prince 23 (9b, 2x4, 2x6), Tim David (not out) 14 (8b, 1x4, 1x6), Romario Shepherd (not out) 14 (8b, 1x4, 1x6). Extras (LB-4, W-1) 5. **TOTAL (for 5 wkts, 15.1 overs) 149.**

Fall of wickets: 1-9 (Salt), 2-66 (Padikkal), 3-86 (Kohli), 4-121 (Patidar), 5-122 (Jitesh).

Bowling: Mohammed Shami 3-0-30-0, Prince Yadav 3-0-32-3, Digvesh Rathi 4-0-51-0, Avesh Khan 4-0-23-2, George Linde 1.1-0-9-0.

Result: RCB won by 5 wickets.

PoM: Josh Hazlewood.

Next RCB match: vs Delhi Capitals (April 18, Bengaluru).

Dhoni's Midas touch in Noor's sizzling spell

CHENNAI, PTI: Spinner Noor Ahmad's match-winning spell against Kolkata Knight Riders followed a lengthy conversation with Chennai Super Kings icon MS Dhoni **(in pic)** in the nets.

The left-arm wrist spinner from Afghanistan ended with figures of three for 21 in four overs, accounting for wickets of Ajinkya Rahane, Rinku Singh and Cameron Green in the middle overs to set up CSK's 32-run win.

Up till Monday night, Noor was yet to make an impact in the ongoing tournament, having taken a solitary wicket in four games.

On a pitch offering little bit of help, Noor was able to get on top of the batters. He got rid of Green with a quicker one into the stumps that the Australia failed to connect.

CSK assistant coach Sridharan Sriram spoke about the work Noor had put heading into the game and the chat with Dhoni, who has not been in action yet this season due to a calf strain.

"I think it was good, the wicket helped today, there was a little bit of boredom for him. The other wickets were quite flat. Today, he was a little bit slower through the air. There was more side spin on the ball, and there was more drop. So that's something he's been working on.

"Even MS had a long chat with him during one of the practice sessions, getting him to bowl more leg break. So I think it was very helpful today and the results were there to show," said Sriram.

Sriram stressed on the importance of getting deviation off the pitch for spinners.

"I think to be able to get some deviation off the surface is very important. I think that is what he's been working on. Everybody accepts there are going to be days when the wickets are going to be very flat.

"But still looking to be aggressive, putting revs on the ball and getting the ball to spin will definitely help him a lot, and that's where you can induce mistakes. Because once you start to get defensive, then the batters are going to get on top of you," he said.

Sriram also touched upon the chemistry between West Indian spinner Akeal Hosein and Noor.

POINTS TABLE

Team	Played	Won	Lost	NR	Pts	NRR
Royal Challengers	5	4	1	0	8	1.503
Rajasthan Royals	5	4	1	0	8	0.889
Punjab Kings	4	3	0	1	7	0.720
Sunrisers Hyderabad	5	2	3	0	4	0.576
Delhi Capitals	4	2	2	0	4	0.322
Gujarat Titans	4	2	2	0	4	-0.029
Lucknow Super Giants	5	2	3	0	4	-0.804
Chennai Super Kings	5	2	3	0	4	-0.846
Mumbai Indians	4	1	3	0	2	-0.772
Kolkata Knight Riders	5	0	4	1	1	-1.383

Abhishek, Axar added to NADA's RTP list

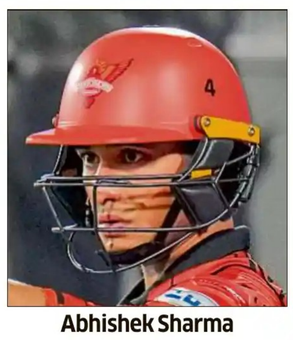
NEW DELHI, PTI

India's T20 World Cup-winning stars Abhishek Sharma and Axar Patel were noticeable additions to the National Anti-Doping Agency's (NADA) Registered Testing Pool, which was dominated by athletics, for the second quarter of the ongoing year.

Abhishek and Axar have replaced Smriti Mandhana and Shreyas Iyer in the latest list of 348 sportspersons in the RTP who will be required to share their whereabouts with the anti-doping agency and be available for testing in a specified window every day.

Three failures to provide whereabouts is considered a doping violation.

The other cricketing names remained unchanged with Test and ODI skipper Shubman Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Hardik Pandya, Rishabh Pant, Jasprit Bumrah, KL Rahul, Arshdeep Singh and Tilak Verma among those picked.



Abhishek Sharma

From the women's team, which won a historic ODI World Cup last year, all-rounder Deepti Sharma and Shafali Verma continue to be on the list alongside Renuka Singh Thakur. In all, 14 cricketers have been placed in the list by the NADA.

The athletics count, which was 118 in the previous NADA RTP, rose to 134 now and featured all major names such as steeplechaser Avinash Sable, hurdler Jyothi Yarraji, decathlete Tejaswin Shankar and sprinter Animesh Kujur among others.

Long jumpers Shaili Singh and M Sreeshankar and discus thrower Tajinderpal Singh Toor have also been named.

There are three archers as well in veteran Deepika Kumari, Rakesh Kumar Archery and celebrated para-archer Sheetal Devi.

From hockey, senior stars Manpreet Singh, skipper Harmanpreet Singh, Amit Rohidas and Hardik Singh are there along with women's team captain Salima Tete, Savita Punia, and Navneet Kaur.

The eight-strong badminton group features P V Sindhu, Lakshya Sen and Gayatri Gopichand among others.

Struggling MI look to resurrect campaign

Injured opener Rohit unlikely starter for game against Punjab Kings

MUMBAI, PTI

A struggling Mumbai Indians will be desperate to resurrect their Indian Premier League campaign while bracing for Rohit Sharma's possible absence against a rampant Punjab Kings here on Thursday.

Rohit hobbled off the pitch after hurting his hamstring during MI's previous clash against Royal Challengers Bengaluru here last Sunday.

While it remains to be seen if the former skipper is available for the must-win clash, Mumbai Indians would nevertheless need a collective effort to come out of the mire they are in.

For a squad which promised to have all bases covered before the IPL began, Mumbai Indians have largely had an underwhelming campaign even after they won their tournament opener for the first time in 13 seasons. Since their most recent loss, MI camp can be trusted to have gone back to the drawing board in order to overcome their powerplay woes which has been one of the biggest factors so far.

Including a rain-truncated game against Rajasthan Royals which had 3.2 overs of powerplay, Mumbai Indians have taken a mere three wickets in the crucial phase of the first six overs in four matches.

Jasprit Bumrah has been spot-on when it comes to containing, but the Indian pace ace has surprisingly gone wicketless in four matches so far. With a seam bowling attack which also has the experienced Trent Boult and Hardik Pandya, the returns have been minimal.

Even with the bat, MI have not gone full throttle in the powerplay where some of the on-song teams have tried to make the most of the field restrictions to give their teams a launching pad.

For Mumbai, the inability to accelerate early on has invariably pushed a chunk of pressure on the middle-order including Suryakumar Yadav and Tilak Varma, who too have largely disappointed. While the Indian T20I skipper still has a half-century to show, runs have dried up for Tilak who has notched up scores of 20, 0, 14 and 1 so far. The unavailability of English all-rounder Will Jacks, who had a successful T20 World Cup in March, is another issue for Mumbai Indians.

Mumbai Indians would feel it is not the case of lacking requisite personnel but their ability to execute, which has resulted in three losses in a row.

On a benign track against RCB, MI bowlers regularly fed balls to be dispatched into the stands while their batters, owing to an ordinary powerplay, could not press the matter later.

Like last season, Shreyas Iyer's Punjab Kings have once again emerged as the team to beat in the competition.

While MI seem to be stuck in the process at the moment, PBKS have been one of the frontrunners.

Rohit Sharma hurt his hamstring during Mumbai Indians' previous fixture against RCB and is set to miss the game versus Punjab Kings on Thursday. PTI

LIVE 7:30 PM

A PATH LESS TRAVERSED

Wunderkind Atiqa dares to live an audacious dream

VIGNESH BHARADWAJ
BENGALURU, DHNS

Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes once said: "In order to attain the impossible, one must attempt the absurd."

And it could not be any truer than in the case of Atiqa Mir.

The Indian racing prodigy, still only 11, might not fully grasp the weight of the words breaking barriers, but she has been challenging the social and cultural norms while carving out a name for herself in a male-dominated karting scene.

For Atiqa, it may feel like just another day on the race track -- stepping on the accelerator, driving at over 125 km/hr, crossing the finish line and celebrating on the podium.

However, the magnitude will only grow as she continues to pursue this ambitious dream of making it to Formula One, a peak where only five women have reached in history.

"I don't think of it as a barrier to break on the track or in life, the stereotypes can put it that way," Atiqa tells *DH*.

Atiqa Mir

"I just treat every car as a number while I am racing. I just want to win, so I focus on myself rather than thinking about other people. My goal is to basically enter and win in Formula 1," she adds.

The Srinagar-born racer is seventh in the International OK-NJ class (age 12-14), making her the highest-ranked female in the rankings.

Atiqa is also the first Indian to be backed by the Formula 1 Academy, and for all her precocious talent, she was fast-tracked into the junior class from the mini at the start of 2026.

And the result? A podium finish in the first round of the Champions of the Future Academy series in Valencia in March.

The trophy cabinet also portrays podium finishes in Qatar, France and the United Arab Emirates.

However, it has not been all sunshine and rainbows for the family over the last four and a half years since Atiqa took up karting.

"When there's a female on track, many don't think much of them, and the moment you compete and win, you see people questioning who was the one out of the helmet and go, 'hey, it's a girl'," says father and former Indian national karting champ Asif Mir.

"And even today, at the higher level, that taboo is still there. And sometimes, even from your own family members," he adds.

While Asif feels a change in mindset is an absolute necessity, he believes that the best way to bring it out is to win every race Atiqa competes in.

"To get bullied on the track, it was something that used to bother us in the beginning. We now live with it. We are on this path and succeeding is the best way to make people rethink of it."

With a father so determined and a daughter so driven, a normal childhood was never going to be in sight. And Atiqa's training regimen only got tougher as she went through the ranks. And now, a large part of her day is training with the simulator or spending time on the track.

Asif's mindset is simple and straightforward. Shoot to the moon and you might just land among the stars. And it does not matter who is driving a kart next to her.

"She's just a driver, and I treat her like a driver. No privileges at all while on track. Because if we start to feel we're the best female drivers, even for our age, that won't get us to Formula One. Red Bull and McLaren will want a driver who wins and it's simple."

While Atiqa is a long way away from driving to her dream destination of Formula 1, her dedication and hunger to succeed are unquestionable.

Shanti Nagar reign supreme again

BENGALURU, DHNS

Magesh S scored a brace as defending champions Shanti Nagar retained the Vaishnavi Chief Minister Cup football tournament after outplaying Rajajinagar 6-3 in the final at the Bangalore Football Stadium on Wednesday.

LOCAL FOOTBALL

Shanti Nagar team, winners of the 2nd Chief Minister Cup football tournament at the BFS in Bengaluru on Wednesday.
DH PHOTO/ B K JANARDHAN

Magesh, who was later adjudged the Best Outstanding Player of the Tournament, meant business from the get-go as he opened Shanti Nagar's account as early as the fifth minute on a sweltering afternoon.

Six minutes later, Ajay Alex made it 2-0 as Rajajinagar looked all at sea. Kaviarasan, however, hauled one back for Rajajinagar in the 25th minute but Magesh restored the two-goal cushion for Shanti Nagar with his second goal just two minutes later. Ajay Alex made 4-1 in the 37th minute, Shanti Nagar well on course for a successful title defence.

Monish Kumar G gave a semblance of hope for the ragged Rajaji Nagar with a goal exactly on the hour mark but Shanti Nagar hit back within 10 minutes through Roshan Singh's goal.

Chris Anthony then struck two minutes from time to make 6-2 as celebrations erupted in the Shanti Nagar camp as the sealed a second straight title.

Results: Shanthi Nagar: 6 (Magesh S 5th, 27th, Vijay T 11th, Ajay Alex 37th, Roshan Singh 70th, Chris Anthony 88th) bt Rajajinagar: 3 (Kaviarasan 25th, Monish Kumar G 60th, 90+3).

Individual awards: Best goalkeeper: Ajith Kumar (Shivaji Nagar); **Best defender:** Anand Japret (KR Puram); **Best midfielder:** A Akash (Rajarajeshwari Nagar); **Best forward:** Kaviarasan (Rajajinagar); **Best Outstanding Player of the Tournament:** Mangesh S (Shanthi Nagar).

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